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#16 • OCT/NOV 2004
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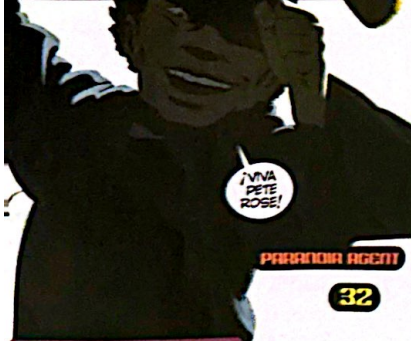

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***Chrono Crusade*'s butt-kicking nun Rosette (left) reveals her secrets on page 36, while Inuyasha's deadliest new villains are exposed on page 26.**

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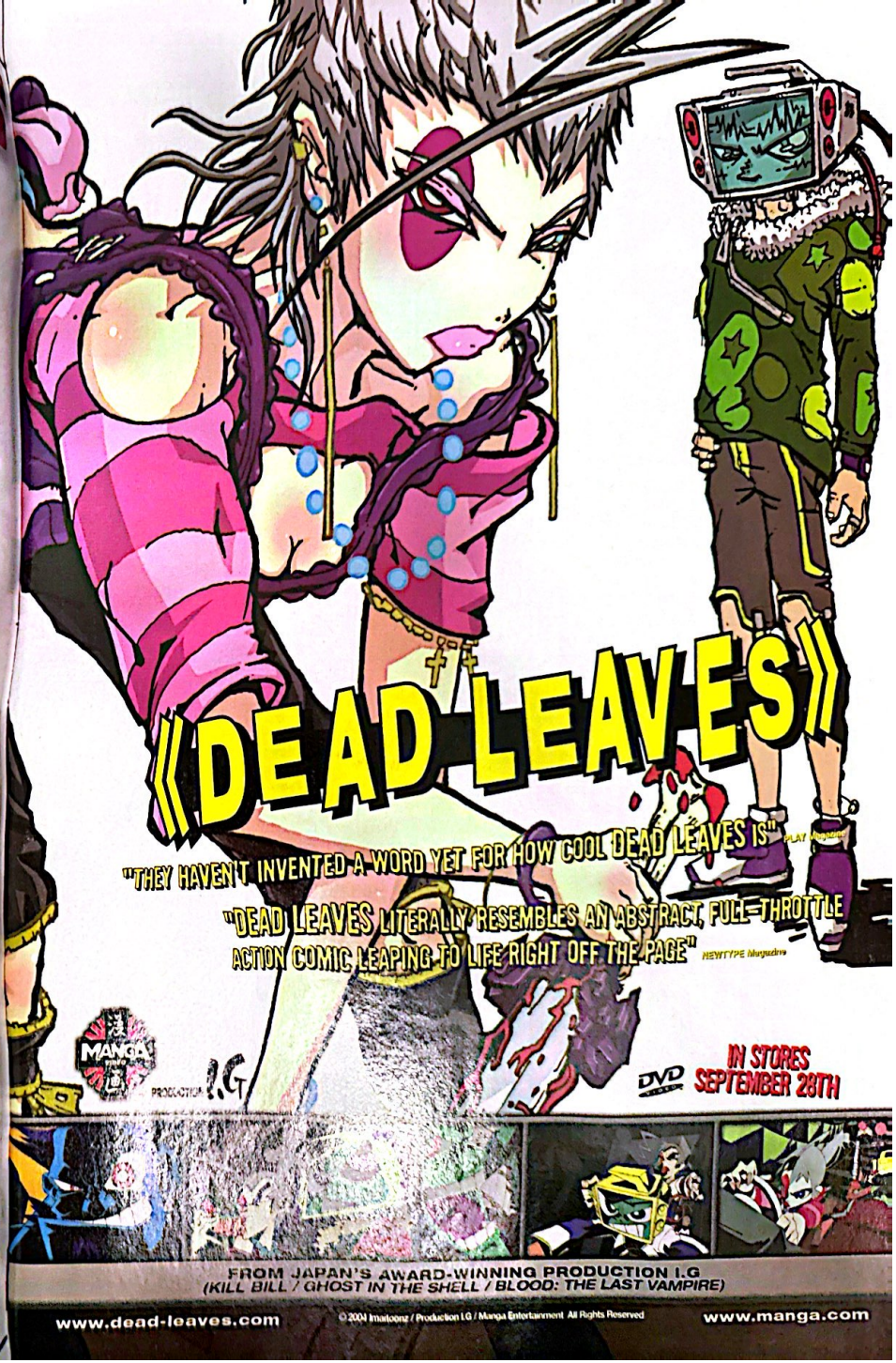

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FROM THE TOP

LEARNING FROM THE PROS OF CONS

WILD CAT GIRL Forgetting to play dead, Senior Editor Andrew Kardon was severly mauled by Dejiko (a.k.a. Laura Robinson of San Jose, CA).

Fear. It's one of the strongest emotions humans experience. Sure, there are the regular everyday fears we face, like fear of flying, falling or death. Heck, even spiders really creep people out. But that's nothing compared to the recent fear I had to tackle: my very first anime convention.

I've been to my fair share of comic book and sci-fi conventions; anime, well, that's an entirely different story. Klingons? They're easy to outwit. Comic fans just want to impress you with Green Lantern trivia. But anime fans...I was scared to death of 'em.

I'd heard all the stories. Anime fans are super-fanatical. They dress up in highly detailed costumes of obscure characters. They'll tear you apart to get a free button of an anime character they don't even like. They're friendly to the point of inflicting pain. They eat wacky Japanese snack food, and tell people they enjoy it. And you know what? It's all true.

Recently at Anime Expo in Anaheim, I saw it firsthand. Thousands of anime fans jostled for a position to snag free T-shirts, buy the new platinum *Evangelion* DVD or pick up the latest *One Piece* volume. And yes, great crowds of cosplayers stalked the floors (like Dejiko from *Di Gi Charat* above, who sprained my wrist, but in a nice way).

What surprised me, though, was not that I lived through the weekend, but that I had a great time. Everyone was just so happy to be there, sharing their appreciation of anime with uninitiated folks like me.

So now that I've conquered this fear, I'm off to skydive out of an airplane with a spider. At least the spider won't make me eat octopus-flavored potato chips.

Andrew Kardon
Senior Editor

MEET THE PRESS

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OBSESSED WITH: Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex. "Sci-fi, action, mystery and that trademark GITS thought-provocation in an awesomely entertaining pop show."

ZAC BERTSCHY, Associate Editor
OBSESSED WITH: Wolf's Rain. "It's on Cartoon Network. It's on DVD. You just can't escape BONES latest masterpiece. If you'll excuse me, I'll be cuddling my Kiba doll."

MIGUEL A.L. ESQUIVEL, Intern
OBSESSED WITH: Neon Genesis Evangelion Platinum Edition. "This gift keeps on giving! Now that Eva's been remastered, I've been dancing with joy—but then moping around in a Shinji-induced depression."

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ANIMAIL!

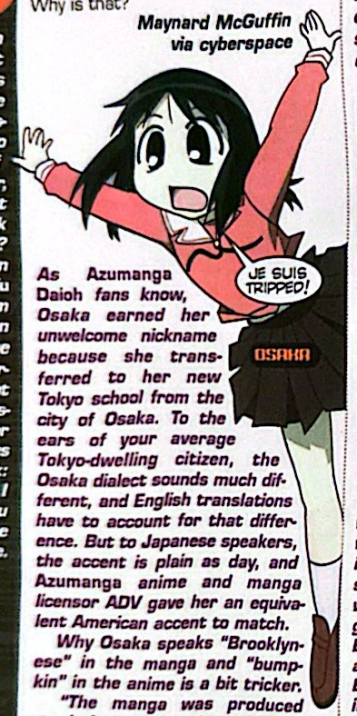
YOU'RE FANS, YOUR MAIL

Your humble letter-answerer, Tom Root, just wanted to take a moment here at the beginning of this month's "Animail" to discuss the difference between good questions and bad questions. A good question might be, "Who are the founding members of CLAMP?" and here, I could answer, "Scripter Nanase Ohkawa, artist Mokona Apapa and assistants Mick Nekoi and Satsuki Igarashi." See? Fun and informative! A bad question would be, "Do you think Hiei from Yu Yu Hakusho would go to my prom with me?" You can see how a question like that doesn't exactly add to the level of discourse. So, as a fun exercise this month, see if you can spot the good questions and the bad questions! And when you pick up a pen or warm up your PC in order to send us mail, just think: good or bad? I hope you make the right choice.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

In the *Azumanga Daioh* manga, Osaka has a heavy New Yorker accent. But in the anime, she has a "country" accent. Why is that?

Maynard McGuffin
via cyberspace



As Azumanga Daioh fans know, Osaka earned her unwelcome nickname because she transferred to her new Tokyo school from the city of Osaka. To the ears of your average Tokyo-dwelling citizen, the Osaka dialect sounds much different, and English translations have to account for that difference. But to Japanese speakers, the accent is plain as day, and Azumanga anime and manga licensor ADV gave her an equivalent American accent to match.

Why Osaka speaks "Brooklynese" in the manga and "bumpkin" in the anime is a bit tricker. "The manga was produced before the anime production got underway, and the two projects were produced as separate entities (the deadlines and schedules are different between departments)," explains ADV Films' Rod Peters. "When we began searching for the appropriate accent for Osaka in the anime, we considered many options—including the Brooklyn-type accent used in the manga. [But] when studying her in the original Japanese anime, the Brooklyn accent didn't seem to fit the character. She came across as cute, sweet and slow in the anime, which the Brooklyn accent didn't seem to fit very well when spoken aloud. And since the anime portrayed Osaka with a sort of semi-rural, laid-back feel, a not-so-heavy Texas accent was what we decided to go with."

Now, we at Anime Insider love our readers down South, and we'd never suggest that a "country" or Southern accent means you're slow-witted! Everyone knows it's people from Oregon who are slow-witted.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

A lot of times when I am looking up anime stuff on the Internet, I end up on Web pages that are in Japanese. Well, there is only one problem: I can't read Japanese! All those symbols might as well be ancient hieroglyphics to me! So my question is this: Is there software I can buy that will turn Japanese into English, or is that just wishful thinking?

Grant Savage
Oklahoma City, OK

There's probably translation software out there, but don't bother with that. Just go to Altavista's immensely useful "Babel Fish" Web site (babelfish.altavista.com), which translates a dozen languages—including Japanese—into English. You just type in the Web address you want to decode, and Babel Fish turns the entire page into English. Best of all, it's free!

It's not perfect, however. Especially with Japanese, which is challenging to translate even for skilled humans, Babel Fish often gives you nothing more than a lot of...babble. But give it a try!

GOOD DAY, ALL...

Is the Jason C. Lee who voiced Aoba in the *Evangelion* movies the same Jason Lee who appears in all those Kevin Smith movies (*Mallrats*, *Chasing Amy*, *Dogma*)? I've tried several sources and no one can give me an answer. The voice on the *Death & Rebirth* and *End of Evangelion* DVD commentary tracks sounds suspiciously similar to that Jason Lee. I need to know to regain my sanity.

Kevin Seguin
St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada

Wow...if the end of Evangelion was like the end of Chasing Amy, that would have been pretty interesting. But I can tell you with 100 percent certainty that Jason Lee and Jason C. Lee are two very different people.

In addition to his Evangelion duties, which also included some directing and producing on the English-language versions, Jason C. Lee was responsible for adding the "Lee" to anime's jill-of-all-trades Amanda Winn Lee (you know her better as the voice of Rei Ayanami among several others). They're husband and wife.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

If Vash the Stampede had a sister, what would you name her?

Brenda Saraiva
via cyberspace

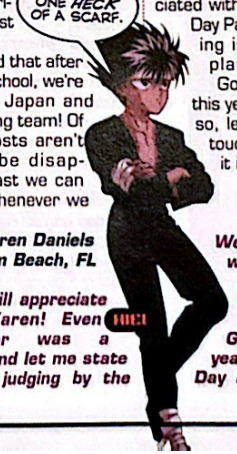
"Trish the Stampede."

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

This letter is going out to Tonya Ring, who wondered if she was the only female *Yu Yu Hakusho* fan out there ["Animail" #14]. No way, sister! I love it, and I have a bunch of girlfriends who love it just as much as me!

We've all decided that after we graduate high school, we're going to move to Japan and form a ghost-hunting team! Of course, since ghosts aren't real, we might be disappointed. But at least we can eat okonomiyaki whenever we want!

Karen Daniels
West Palm Beach, FL



I'm sure Tonya will appreciate the support, Karen! Even if your letter was a little...strange. And let me state for the record: judging by the mail I get from all of you, anime fans are about evenly divided between male and female. The only difference between them is that the female fans want pictures of Hiei without his shirt, and the male fans are quite willing for him to keep it on.

Yep, one more reason that anime fandom is the closest thing we have to utopia.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

What's the 411 on Yoko Kanno, the person who gave us the music for *Cowboy Bebop* and *Wolf's Rain*?

Randy Scribner Jr.
Charlotte, NC

Kanno, also responsible for the brilliant, wildly varying scores to Please Save My Earth, Macross Plus, Vision of Escaflowne and Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex, is by all accounts as prolific and talented a musician as you're ever likely to meet. Not only does she compose in every musical style imaginable, she also plays many instruments and (it's rumored) sings on many of her own compositions under the pseudonym "Gabriela Robin." Some great online resources about Kanno include geocities.com/helixcat_2000 and jameswong.com/ykproject.

By contrast, I can play the triangle.

DEAR A.I.,

Hi there! I have something I'd like to ask of you: Since this is the year of the 50th anniversary of Godzilla, do you by any chance know of anybody associated with the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade? The reason I'm asking is to find out if they are planning on doing a giant Godzilla parade balloon for this year, on his 50th birthday. If so, let me know how to get in touch with the. I'd appreciate it immensely. Thanks tons.

Anthony Ogozalek
Franklin Square, NY

We called the balloon wrangler over at Macy's, who told us, yes, there had been plans for a 50th Anniversary Godzilla balloon at this year's Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, but two Gigan

COSPLAY CAVALCADE

WARRIOR RIKKU

BY LISA SANCHELO, FARMERS BRANCH, TX

While the regular Rikku from Final Fantasy X-2 may be more recognizable, Lisa Sanchelo went the more modest route by choosing the spunky thief in her more modest Warrior garb—and compensated for lack of skin by doing a perfect job. From the crazy costume design to her elaborate sword, Lisa's created one of the best FF costumes we've ever seen. But the craziest part is that she got Rikku's crazy-swirly AI Bhed eyes just right—check out the inset shot. When we asked her how she made them, she transformed back into her Thief outfit and stole all our gil. Don't look directly into her eyes, lest ye go mad!

WEBPOLL

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE ANIME VILLAIN?

Jason Lee © Wordmage, Inuyasha © Rumiko Takahashi/Shogakukan • SUNRISE • Tenkuri TV 2000, Yu Yu Hakusho © 1992, 2002 Yoshihiro Togashi/Shueisha • Fuji TV • Permit

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and King Ghidorah balloons attacked Macy's while it was being constructed. As a result, Godzilla will not be ready. If only the Mothra balloon had been summoned in time!

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,
I have some questions for you. You rule. So answer my questions.

1. What is J-Pop? Is it just anime soundtracks?
2. Is it weird that I like listening to music where I can't understand any of the words?
3. What is the etiquette for sweating while you play *Dance Dance Revolution*? I mean, gross.

Jennifer Wilson
Fremont, CA

1. "J-Pop" is short for "Japanese pop music." Not all J-Pop is anime soundtracks, and not all anime soundtracks are J-Pop, but they do intersect sometimes. When fans refer to J-Pop, they're generally referring to "idol" singers—often the Japanese equivalent of Britney Spears. J-Pop finds its way into anime all the time, and vice versa; for example, anime voiceover actress extraordinaire Megumi Hayashibara has carved herself quite a side career as a popular singer.

2. Hell no! Remember when America fell in love with Ricky Martin's "Livin' La Vida Loca"? Well, that had a lot of French words in it. And don't forget the 1990s dance craze "Macarena," which was almost completely in German! For my money, the best part about listening to pop music in another language is that you don't realize how stupid the lyrics are!

3. When playing DDR, wear a sweatband or cap, wear loose yet absorbent clothing and maybe bring a small towel. If you still find you're spraying sweat all over onlookers, you might have some sort of glandular condition.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,
So, are video games like *Final Fantasy* considered anime? I always see it lumped into the same category as anime. Like, even in your cosplay feature in *Anime Insider* #15, you showed a girl dressed like *FF*'s Yuna. What's the deal with that, exactly?

Todd Ralston
via cyberspace

Young space cadets on a mission to save earth from another cosmic disaster!
From the creative staff of *Love Hina* and *Nadesico*

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VOCAB LIST

What are they saying? What do they mean? Find out here!

BAKA—[BAH-kah] Japanese for "idiot." A popular Japanese word learned by anime newbies.
DAIJOUBU—[DIE-jou-boo] "It's okay" or "I'm okay." An easy word to pick out when watching anime.
JISHO—[JEE-sho] A dictionary. If you had a jisho, you wouldn't need to read this!
KI—[KEE] A tree. Go read your jisho in a ki.
MANGA-KA—[MAHN-ga KA] Japanese word for creator of manga.
MOCHIRON—[MOE-chee-ron] "Of course!"
OTAKU—[o-TAH-koo] Hardcore anime fan. If you have a tattoo, you probably are one.
SEIYUU—[SAY-yoo] A voice actor or actress.
SENSEI—[SEN-say] Teacher or instructor. Also used as an honorific: "Boizuka-sensei."
SHOKUJI—[SHO-koo-jee] A general term for a meal. Dinner, breakfast and lunch all have other words for them!
SHÔNEN—[SHO-nehn] An adjective meaning "for boys." Shônen manga, shônen anime, etc. Shôjo is the equivalent "for girls."
TAMAGO—[TAH-mah-go] An egg. Mmm, tasty.
YASAI—[YAH-sigh] A vegetable. Mmm...not so tasty.

CULTURE SHOCKER

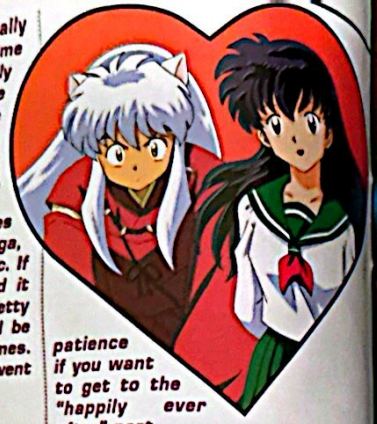
Why the Japanese do those weird things they do

In Japan, elementary school through high school might be a punishing grind, but in college, things get much easier. It's getting in to college that's a nightmare. The entrance exams for most decent Japanese colleges are so difficult that special schools called *Juku* (basically "cram" schools) are required to help desperate students prepare, especially those poor students who failed their exams more than twice in a row. There are even cram schools for Japanese toddlers hoping to get in to exclusive kindergartens! Perhaps eventually they'll figure out a way to get their children to study while still in the womb...or not. ■ Zac Bertschy

Well, Final Fantasy technically slides into the anime category because it's actually had some anime. But no, the games really aren't anime themselves—though playing them is a lot like getting immersed in extremely cool, anime-ish worlds.

Anime fandom encompasses quite a bit: anime, toys, manga, video games, trading cards, etc. If it's cool, character-driven and it comes from Japan, it's a pretty good bet that anime fans will be into it—especially video games. When was the last time you went to an anime con that didn't have a huge video gaming area? Or been to a con where there was no video game-based cosplay? The Final Fantasy series has an edge with anime fans since the characters that clearly have an anime-esque design to them, even if they aren't strictly anime. The boundaries are pretty blurred.

But Todd, just for you, I'm going to ban Squall Leonhart from the pages of this magazine. His sullen, DiCaprio-lookin' keister is banned, baby!



patience if you want to get to the "happily ever after" part.

There's a good reason for it, though. It's that unresolved romantic tension that keeps readers (and viewers) coming back week after week. If Inuyasha and Kagome were already proclaiming their love for one another by episode three, a big chunk of the story would fizzle right out. And the thousands of Inuyasha's female fans would hate Kagome for snagging Inuyasha instead of wishing they were together. Wacky, huh?

And on that note, it's time for me to skedaddle. Could you pick out the bad questions from the good? Good! Now get writing! If each and every one of you doesn't write me one letter in the next month, you're all in big trouble!

—Tom Root

Much like Monkey D. Luffy, Tom Root's dream is to be the greatest pirate who ever lived! As long as he can make it happen over the weekend.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

Why don't Inuyasha and Kagome show their true feelings for each other? I mean, they're always looking out for each other and it seems like there is a lot of romance happening between them!

Alondra Aispuro
Atlanta, GA

Welcome to the wonderful world of Rumiko Takahashi, Alondra! The creator of Urusei Yatsura, Maison Ikkoku, Ranma 1/2 and Inuyasha is known for her stellar characterization and side-splitting slapstick, but she's also known for something else: reluctant romances that take years and years to play out! Whether it's Ataru and Lum, Yusaku and Kyoko, Ranma and Akane or Inuyasha and Kagome, you'd better have a whole hell of a lot of

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INSIDER NEWS+NOTES

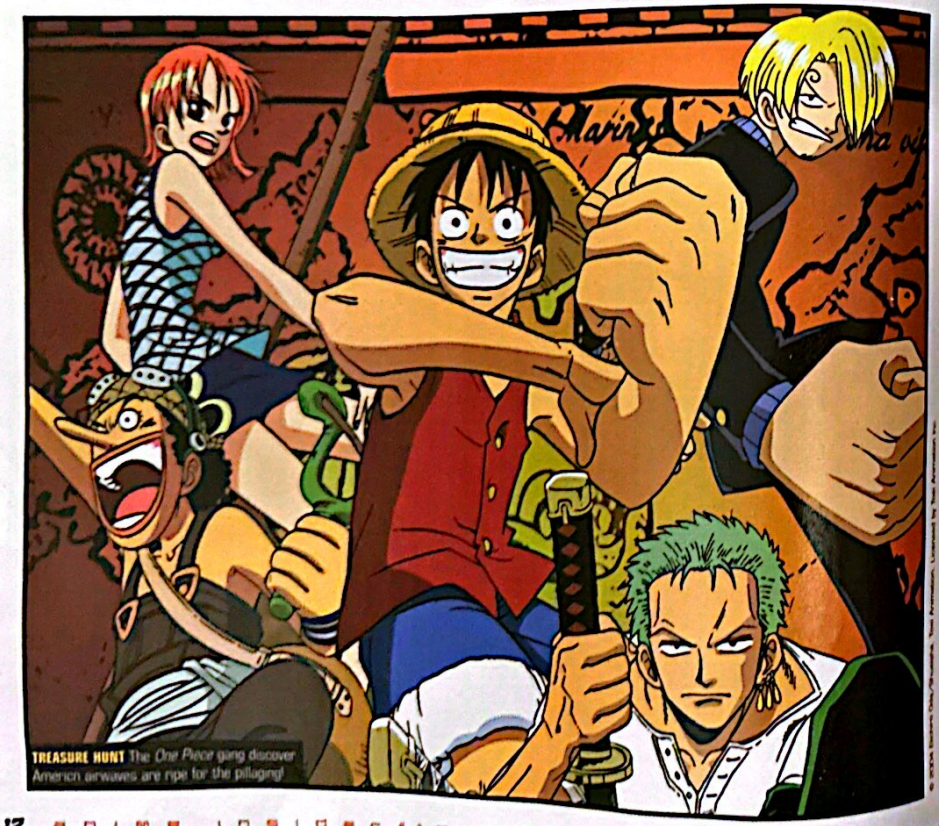
'ONE PIECE' AT A TIME

The King of Pirates finally sets sail for America!

It didn't make much international news, but in 1997, pirates conquered Japan. Since then, these pirates have stolen over one billion dollars, and they're on their way to America.

Thank 4Kids Entertainment for inviting them, since they're the ones who licensed *One Piece*—the hit anime whose manga is currently serialized in *Shonen Jump*—to premiere on their FoxBox programming block on September 18.

The story, set in a fantastical world full of pirates, follows young Monkey D. Luffy is his quest to be come the King of Pirates. To do this, he must obtain the One Piece, the ultimate treasure hidden by the legendary Gold Roger. On his plus side, he's eaten a Cursed Fruit, which gives its eater one of countless magic powers. Luffy happened to snack on the Gum-Gum Fruit, which now allows him to stretch, twist and expand his body to ridiculous lengths. The cost for this power is high, though, as those who eat the Cursed Fruit are rejected by the sea, and lose the ability to swim whatsoever. This doesn't bother Luffy—nor does the fact he has no pirate crew and no ship!



TREASURE HUNT The *One Piece* gang discover American airwaves are ripe for the pillaging!

Nor will it stop Luffy from sailing to America's Saturday morning, which producer John Kalish thinks will make a suitable home for a pirate king. "I think it would've been a shame if *One Piece* didn't get sort of programmed at a time where the widest amount of people as possible can see it," said Kalish. *One Piece* is undoubtedly a mass-market property in Japan—since manga-ka Eiichiro Oda created *One Piece* in 1997, his epic saga has begotten 33 manga volumes, over 200 TV episodes, five theatrical movies, eight video games and so much merchandise that there's a whole chain of stores (called "One Piece Shops") in Japan to sell them—and there's no sign of any of 'em slowing down. 4Kids hopes that by putting Luffy and crew on Saturday mornings, it will give them a chance to replicate the success of their American Saturday morning forbears *Pokémon* and *Yu-Gi-Oh!*.

Although the series will need to be edited for American broadcast, *One Piece*-loving otaku don't need to walk the plank: Kalish says 4Kids will be making the minimum amount of changes necessary to air *One Piece* on American TV. "I think the biggest challenge is really honoring the original series," says Kalish. "There's no reason for us to change the names just for change's sake. That being said, there are certain issues that I think for our audience that we need to be concerned about. Those things include depictions or embracing of any idea of smoking, drinking and certain kinds of acts of violence. We want to be sure that we're not endorsing things that we don't want kids in this country to be repeating."

Thus Sanji (see sidebar), Luffy's crewmate who's never seen without a cigarette in the original Japanese version, will now be toting a sucker for American broadcast. "I think ultimately, it comes down to the core issue of who these characters are," said Kalish. "Is it the smoking that's important, or is it sort of the attitude behind it? As long as we can preserve the identity of the character in a way that's still true to the core idea of who he is, smoking becomes not the issue as much as who he is, as far as personality is concerned."

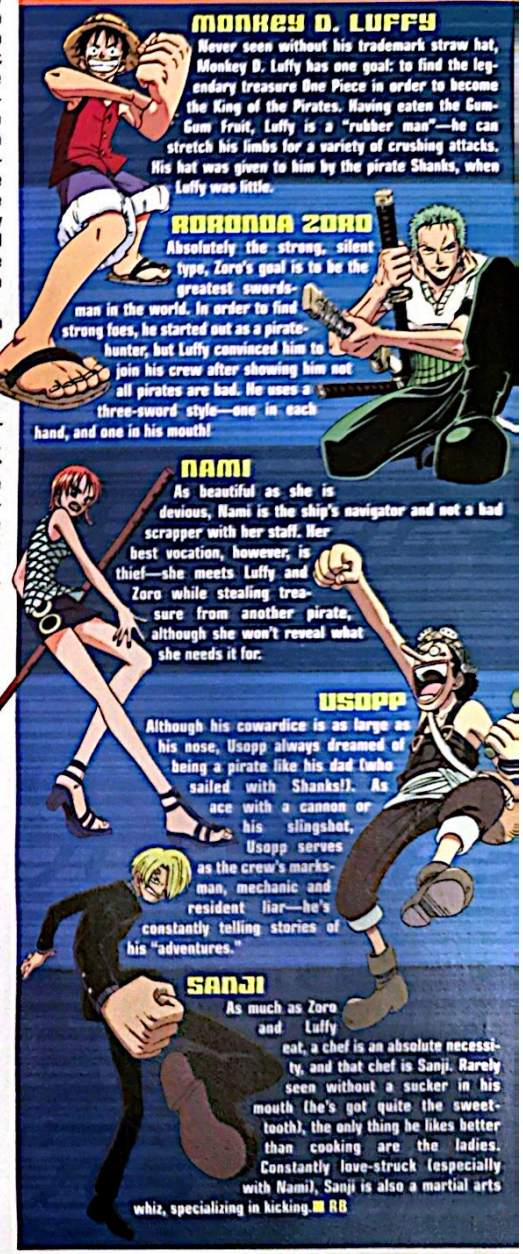
As far as the Standards and Practices—the Federal Communication Commission rules which say what can and cannot be shown on American TV—goes, the U.S. release of *One Piece* cannot include smoking, drinking, excessive violence or explicit death, all of which appears in the original *One Piece*.

Fans can rest assured that Toei Animation, who created the anime series in Japan, is taking an active role in overseeing the American production of *One Piece*. "Nothing major will happen without all the key players on this show from Japan getting involved," assured Kalish. "They even have approval on all character voices, although we've really been on the same page with every choice so far. Any adjustments we need to make we're doing in concert with our colleagues in Japan so that we don't, not to use a nautical pun, so that we don't miss the boat when it comes to maintaining the spirit of this show."

With 4Kids Entertainment's history of anime success, a prime timeslot and the sheer fact it's Japan's biggest anime since *Dragon Ball Z*, *One Piece* will likely find America as easy to conquer as Japan was. And all viewers will need to do to find treasure is watch on September 18. ■ Robert Bricken

BOOTY CALL

MEET THE STRAW-HAT PIRATES!



MONKEY D. LUFFY

Never seen without his trademark straw hat, Monkey D. Luffy has one goal: to find the legendary treasure One Piece in order to become the King of the Pirates. Having eaten the Gum-Gum fruit, Luffy is a "rubber man"—he can stretch his limbs for a variety of crushing attacks. His hat was given to him by the pirate Shanks, when Luffy was little.

RORONOA ZORO

Absolutely the strong, silent type, Zoro's goal is to be the greatest swordsman in the world. In order to find strong foes, he started out as a pirate-hunter, but Luffy convinced him to join his crew after showing him not all pirates are bad. He uses a three-sword style—one in each hand, and one in his mouth!

NAMI

As beautiful as she is devious, Nami is the ship's navigator and not a bad scrapper with her staff. Her best vocation, however, is thief—she meets Luffy and Zoro while stealing treasure from another pirate, although she won't reveal what she needs it for.

USOPP

Although his cowardice is as large as his nose, Usopp always dreamed of being a pirate like his dad (who sailed with Shanks!). As ace with a cannon or his slingshot, Usopp serves as the crew's marksman, mechanic and resident liar—he's constantly telling stories of his "adventures."

SANJI

As much as Zoro and Luffy eat, a chef is an absolute necessity, and that chef is Sanji. Rarely seen without a sucker in his mouth (he's got quite the sweet-tooth), the only thing he likes better than cooking are the ladies. Constantly love-struck (especially with Nami), Sanji is also a martial arts whiz, specializing in kicking. ■ RB

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SPECIAL REPORT!

FIVE FOR '05

Anime Expo's top titles primed to explode next year

This July, over 25,000 otaku flooded into the Anaheim convention center for the 2004 Anime Expo, and the only thing they wanted more than merchandise was the new anime license announcements. Over 25 new shows were announced (see sidebar), but we've distilled those down and selected the top five hottest new series you won't see until you throw out your calendar (or next year, whichever comes first).

BURST ANGEL (FUNimation) Kyohei Tachibana thought he had it all figured out—hard up for cash, the would-be-chef answers a want ad placed by Sei, Meg, Amy and Jo, four women who on the surface appear to be your average everyday trouble contractors. When Kyohei winds up getting kidnapped by a bloodthirsty, murderous criminal syndicate with a vendetta against the girls, he finds out that this new job will be a lot more than advertised!

"Gonzo is known for their awesome mixture of 2D and 3D digital animation and rich storytelling," stated Lance Heiskell, FUNimation brand manager. "With its combination of girls, guns, mecha and a great plot, our fans are in for a wild ride! We've had great success with our other Gonzo title, *Kiddy Grade* and we expect the same for *Burst Angel*."

MYSTICAL SLEUTH LOKI RAGNAROK (ADV Films) Loki, the Norse god of mischief, has been exiled by his fellow deities for telling one too many bad jokes! Forced to take the form of a human child, Loki realizes that in order to regain his usual form, he'll have to collect the evil auras that consume human hearts. This pint-sized, super-powered hero opens a detective agency alongside a mystery-obsessed girl named Mayura who crashes her way through each episode, helping (and sometimes hindering) Loki's pursuit of his old heavenly life. When other Norse gods start showing up, it's clear they don't want to be friends; they're trying to take Loki out for unknown reasons!

RUMIKO TAKAHASHI ANTHOLOGY (Geneon Entertainment) Before world-famous manga-ka Rumiko Takahashi created hits like Inuyasha and Ranma 1/2, she did a series of one-shot manga called *Rumic World*. These lesser-known works have been transformed into anime via the 13-episode *Rumiko Takahashi Anthology*. The show's myriad topics range from the simple things in life like caring for a neighbor's frustrating pet to wild flights of fancy, like an old woman with ESP who's destined to help a young couple find love together! It's unique Japanese storytelling as only Rumiko can do it. "Since Rumiko Takahashi is so loved and respected by American fans, we are lucky and excited to be involved," said Geneon Entertainment VP of Business Development Hideki Goto. It might not have the hard-hitting action of *Inuyasha*, but c'mon—Rumiko Takahashi doesn't do bad work!

FAIR-WEATHER FRIENDS *Burst Angel's* Jo and Meg fight crime, but only in warm climes.

Burst Angel © Gonzo/Philippe Kaiser

SCRAPPED PRINCESS (Bandai Entertainment) This hotly anticipated title from studio Bones (*Cowboy Bebop*, *Wolf's Rain*) is adored by legions of fans in Japan, and Bandai Entertainment is set to toss it willy-nilly into America. The story follows a doomed princess named Pacifica who has the singular misfortune of being named Harbinger of the End of the World as prophesized by the god Mazuel. The prophecy is said to come around on the advent of Pacifica's 16th birthday; it's up to her sword-swinging brother Shannon and spell-slingin' pal Racquel to save her from Mazuel's malevolent followers, who struggle to end her ill-fated life at every turn. "An exciting fantasy story with a unique twist, *Scrapped Princess* boasts excellent animation and a story that will leave viewers wanting more," said producer Charles McCarter. "Already a fan favorite, *Scrapped Princess* is well on its way to securing a prominent place in the lineup of unique and creative shows produced by Bones." It's axe-throwing, magic-using, monster-fighting high fantasy at its finest!

TENCHI MUYO! OVA 3 (FUNimation) It's kept anime fans up at night for too long—which girl does Tenchi pick? The answer is finally settled in this third *Tenchi Muyo* OVA collection, as promised by creator Masaki Kajishima himself.

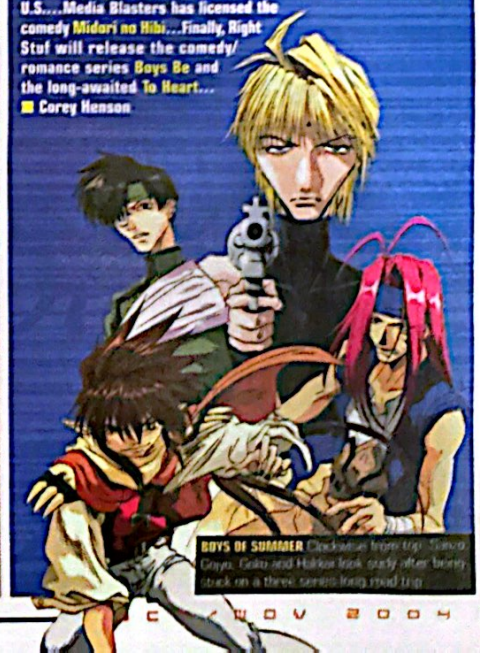
"We couldn't be more thrilled to have *Tenchi Muyo!*, the grandaddy of all harem anime shows to find a home at FUNimation," exclaimed Heiskell. "*Tenchi Muyo!* was one of shows that first introduced many people to anime back in the mid '90s. This third OVA series picks up right after where those first two OVA series left off." Tenchi's mother (as well as his future wife) makes a surprise appearance, and our heroic milquetoast finally makes his move and selects a bride! Will it be mischievous space pirate Ryoko, her arch-nemesis the prissy Ayeka, bubble-headed Mihoshi or demure and frankly too young Sasami? Only Masaki Kajishima knows for sure...for now! ■ Zac Bertschy

Saiyuki © 2000 Kazuya Minekura/Ene • Saiyuki Project • TV Tokyo, Scrapped Princess © Woowow/Saiyuki Committee, Loki Ragnarok © 2003 K-M/R/TX.

LICENSED TO THRILL

THE OTHER AX-ANNOUNCED TITLES

ADV Films likes to make an impact at AX by announcing a slew of titles, and this year was no exception, including the magical girl series **Maburaho** and **Yumeria**; Gonzo's **Gantz**, a new series that's heavy on psychological horror, and **Gravion Zwei**, the sequel to the hit series **Gravion**; the movie **Saiyuki: Requiem**, which continues the adventures started in the TV series; the highly anticipated movie **Tree of Palme**; **Tactics**; **Elfin Lied**; **Detective Loki Ragnorak**; **Erementar Gerard**; **Marine Boy**; **Hello Kitty Animation Theater**; **Moeyo Ken**; **Legend of Moby Dick**; **Gilgamesh**; **KURAU**; and **Area 88 TV**...AN Entertainment ended months of rampant speculation by anime fans by announcing plans to release the 26-episode TV series **Haré+Guu** and the OVA sequel **Guu Deluxe**, which will both hit stores in 2005. While the deal hasn't been finalized yet, company representatives also said they expect to soon sign an agreement to release the **Guu Final** OVA as well...Bandai announced plans to release **Dan Doh!!**, a sports anime set in the highly competitive world of golf and the romantic comedy OVA **Onegai Twins**, a sequel to **Please! Teacher**...Geneon proudly announced the acquisitions of **Saiyuki: Reload** and **Saiyuki: Gunlock**, both sequels to ADV's *Saiyuki*; the brand new **Shin Getter Robo OVA**; **Popotan**, a TV series about three sisters and their android maid, all of whom live in a time-traveling house; and the hilarious adventure series **Earth Defense Family**, which will be renamed **The Daichis** (after the title's lead characters) before its release in the U.S....Media Blasters has licensed the comedy **Midori no Hibi**...Finally, Right Stuf will release the comedy/romance series **Boys Be** and the long-awaited **To Heart**...
■ Corey Henson



BOYS OF SUMMER Clockwise from top: Tomo, Goyo, Goto and Hakoe look cozy after being stuck on a three-series-long road trip.

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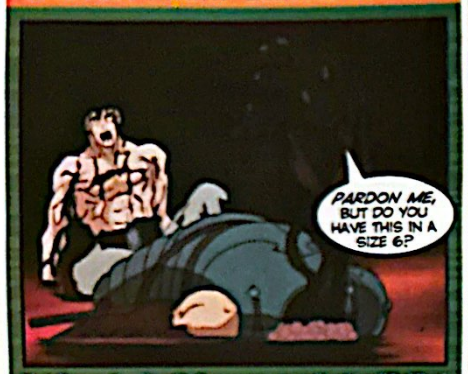
DEATH OF THE MONTH

GASTON FROM 'BERSERK'



It's hell on earth—literally! A ceremony started by the evil God Hand organization designed to turn Griffith, the leader of the heroic White Hawks, into a demon has shrouded the world in darkness. Unfortunately for Griffith's teammates, they must be sacrificed to complete the proceedings. One of them, Gaston, thinks he's one of the lucky survivors...until he discovers that a demon's been living inside of him, eating his innards and taking up valuable organ space. It's probably just a coincidence that the lil' guy chooses the same moment to greet the new world by way of Gaston's neck; poor Gaston's head explodes as the nasty little guy bursts forth, in a welcoming blood shower. Well, better going out than in, we guess. ■ Miguel A.L. Esquivel

OVERHEARD

"Too many thugs! Too many yo-yos!"
—Jonouchi (a.k.a. Joey) in the *Yu-Gi-Oh!* manga

FASHION ALERT

TSUME JUST LOVES THE '80'S

In *Wolf's Rain*, there's no doubt about the gruff-and-tumble Tsume's fighting skill; if he isn't tussling with the bad guys, he's picking fights with enigmatic pack leader Kiba. Turns out he's a sharp dresser, too! "This outfit is not only fun, but quite functional," says Ruby Holiday, fashion editor for *Gothic Beauty* magazine. "In some circles, it could even be considered the epitome of 'coolness.' Any self-respecting rocker will have at least one form of this outfit hanging in their closet." Holiday says to check your local thrift shops and retro clothing stores to achieve that Tsume style. ■ Zac Bertschy

CAPTURED HEARTS Sakura (left) and Tomoyo celebrate CLAMP's 15th Anniversary in style

CLAMP-ING GROUNDS

TOKYOPOP locks down CLAMP 15th Anniversary goodies

They're not quite sweet sixteen yet, but that didn't stop manga wonders CLAMP (*Chobits*, *Cardcaptor Sakura*, *Tsubasa*) from pulling out all the stops for their 15th anniversary. Happily, TOKYOPOP, publishers of most of CLAMP's series in the U.S., is bringing those stops to America. TOKYOPOP will be publishing *CLAMP No Kiseki: The Ultimate Collection*, as well as CLAMP's *North Side* and *South Side* art books in 2005. "It's a huge and very exciting event for TOKYOPOP," said Susan Hale, director of public relations for TOKYOPOP. "Just like the fans, we love all things CLAMP!"

Created specifically for their anniversary in Japan, *CLAMP No Kiseki* is a twelve-volume collection set be released over a span of two years. Each publication will highlight a beloved manga from the group's repertoire with artwork and exclusive, never-before-seen interviews. Every volume will also come packaged with three collectible chess pieces depicting favorite CLAMP characters. The first issue, spotlighting *Cardcaptor Sakura*, is expected to hit select stores spring 2005.

If you can't wait for the collection, the *North Side* and *South Side* art books will include CLAMP's work from 1989 through 2000, and will be available in January of 2005. The two books will offer exclusive materials, specifically a "how-to" section for aspiring manga artists and an exclusive *CLAMP in Wonderland* comic, featuring their popular characters interacting in a fairytale setting.

CLAMP CHESS PIECE

Just watch the roads next year, when the CLAMP collective gets their driver's license. ■ Elisa Lee

Sakura © NTV-ASA, Yu-Gi-Oh © 1996 Kazuki Takahashi/Shueisha, Wild's Run © Bones • Kado Nobumoto/KA, Cardcaptor Sakura © Clamp

THE MEW SCHOOL

Learn the shocking secrets of the 'Tokyo MewMew' heroines

Being injected with endangered animal DNA may have given the girls of *Tokyo MewMew* special powers, but not every animal attribute is good! If you've been watching *MewMew* on 4Kids' FoxBox (or reading the manga from TOKYOPOP), here's the side effects the show won't tell you!

ICHIGO Brave but ditzy, Ichigo draws her powers from the Iriomote cat, a wildcat found only on the Japanese island Iriomotejima. She combines her zest for teamwork with her Strawberry Bell Bell attack to drive back enemies.
BEASTLY BURDEN: As an Iriomote cat, she's secretly up all night stuffing her face with fruit bats and insects.

MINT The rich and stuck up Mint would prefer nothing more than bossing around Ichigo all day long, even as an ultramarine lorikeet. Found only on two tiny islands in the world, it lends its powers to Mint in her Echo attacks.
BEASTLY BURDEN: For someone constantly under attack from starving black rats, Mint sure is bratty.

LETTUCE Extremely caring and shy, this klutz shares her powers with the black finless porpoise, a rare animal that has a bulbous melon on its head and lacks fins. Her special powers let her shoot beams out of a pair of castanets.
BEASTLY BURDEN: It's no surprise she's always dropping things—black finless porpoises have no limbs.

PUDDING This hyperactive girl is always getting into trouble. Helping out with her amazing gymnastic abilities, thanks to powers she got from a fuzzy, tawny monkey known as the golden lion tamarin.
BEASTLY BURDEN: What the anime doesn't show you is Pudding's long, gangly fingers, which she uses to dig into trees for grubs. Nummy!

ZAKURO About as stuck up as Mint, this celebrity-turned-magical-girl prefers her own high company to anything involving the girls. Carrying around a whip, she's able to launch slashing attacks because of her union with the grey wolf...
BEASTLY BURDEN: ...which is an animal known to raid a garbage can or two. ■ Bamboo Dong

T.M. Revolution © Kazuko Tanaka, Tokyo Mew Mew © Kodansha, TV Asahi/Tokyo Mew Mew Committee; Gundam Seed © 2002 Sotsu Agency/Sunrise

LIP SERVICE

ROCKIN' WITH T.M.REVOLUTION, VOICE OF GUNDAM SEED'S MIGUEL AIMAN

Whether it's as a J-pop superstar or the voice of ZAFT mobile suit ace Miguel in *Gundam Seed*, T.M.Revolution knows how to make an impression. Between his clothing line, radio show and numerous hit albums (available stateside from Tofu Records) we don't know how the 34-year-old artist had time for this interview!

T.M.REVOLUTION

A.I.: How did you prepare yourself for the role of Miguel Aiman?
T.M. REVOLUTION: Mr. Fukuda, the director of *Gundam Seed*, is a fan of mine and he used my image when he created the character of Miguel. So he told me that I could just be myself when I did the voice.

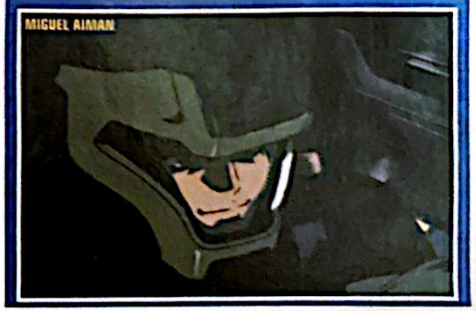
Have you heard the English voice of Miguel yet?
I thought (the U.S. version of Miguel) was great, but at the same time I thought that, one day, I would want to do the English version, too!

SEVENTH HEAVEN ALBUM

You're quite the rock star—who are your musical influences?
When I was little, MTV was just introduced in Japan, so I grew up listening to Top 40 songs from the U.S., as well as the music from the U.K. I was into Mötley Crüe, Ozzy Osbourne, Def Leppard and such. I didn't understand the words they were singing, but the sound of the music and intonation of the words were fascinating.

What's the difference between American and Japanese anime fans?
In Japan, people grow up with anime and there are dozens of titles aired on TV every week, so maybe we take anime for granted. Maybe American people value Japanese anime more than the Japanese do.

What's your favorite food?
I especially like Japanese food, of course, but I feel like eating American food when I'm in America. So I've been eating steak every day here! ■ RB & ME



MIGUEL AIMAN

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OUT OF THE POOL!

Here are the winners of A.I.'s 2004 swimsuit contest!

You need three things for ultimate fun in the summer sun: beaches, bombshells and bikinis! While *A.I.* can't help you out on that first one, we brought you some of anime's hottest guys and gals on our website, and let you choose who were the best, who were just busted.

For the guys, *Gundam Wing*'s Heero Yuy predictably decimated *Azumanga Daioh*'s Mr. Kimura and *GateKeepers*' Ukiya Shin with an astounding 80 percent of the votes! Meanwhile, what started as a tight race between *Evangelion*'s Asuka Soryuu Langley and Tina Foster from *Ai Yori Aoshi* turned into another landslide in favor of the angelic pilot, who more than doubled Tina and poor Excel's combined votes. ■ ME

IF IT WERE ANIME

THE LORD OF THE RINGS

In the land of Mido-Earth, all the ancient dark lord Saulon needs is his precious One Ring to return to physical form and cover all the lands in darkness! When the superdeformed (and highly marketable!) Hobbito named Furodo accidentally finds the ring, it's up to him travel across Mido-Earth, dodge the monstrous armies of Saulon, resist the evil power of the Ring, and then throw it into the fires of Doom-yama to end Saulon's terror forever! Luckily, the task isn't on Furodo's slender shoulders alone—he'll travel with his best Hobbito friends, the super bishonen elf archer Regorasu, and the powerful mahou-jiji Gandarufu! ■ ZB

ART BY DAVID HUTCHINSON

CON JOB

Pack your bags and head for the anime shows!

JAPAN TOWNE ANIME FAIRE
(September 11-12, San Francisco, CA)
Guests for the second annual convention include Tiffany Grant (*Evangelion*) and singer/songwriter Moulann, among others. Attendees can look forward to the usual con events like industry panels, cosplay and more. **www.jatf.com**

ANIMEIOWA 2004
(September 17-19, Des Moines, IO)
Martian Successor Nadesico creator Kia Asamiya will be on hand to meet fans, as will voice actors Monica Rial (*Noir*) and Greg Ayres (*Full Metal Panic!*). Of course, the highlight of the event is sure to be the annual Giant Piñata Smack Down! **www.animeiowa.com**

ANIME WEEKEND ATLANTA
(September 24-26, Atlanta, GA)
Hobnob with special guests like anime historian Fred Patten, Kari Wahlgren (the voice of the titular *Witch Hunter Robin*), Mari Iijima (the voice of Lynn Minmay in *Robotech: Macross*) and many more. If you're looking for a convention hook-up, don't forget to check out the AWA Rose Ball. Ball gowns, suits and powder blue tuxes are acceptable, but leave the leisure suit at home. Nobody wants to see that. **www.awa-con.com**

ANI-MAGIC
(October 1-3, Valencia, CA)
Among the many guests are Hilary Haag (The *Super Milk-Chan Show*), Debbie Rabbai (*His and Hers Circumstances*), and the industry guest of honor, ADV Films co-founder Matt Greenfield. **www.ani-magic.net**

ONI-CON
(October 22-24, Houston, TX)
It's Houston's first anime con, so H-Town otaku will finally get the chance to meet their favorite anime personalities like Kyle Hebert (*Dragon Ball Z*), director Taliesin Jaffe (*Hellsing*) and many more of the usual convention suspects. Plus rock out to J-Pop superstars Duel Jewel, who will be performing two concerts, including a special unplugged set! **www.oni-con.com** ■ CH

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LAST MAN STANDING

A BATTLE YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER SEE

Motoko & Batou

Éclair & Lumiere

Japan, Earth	HOMEBASE	Planet Aineias
Section 9	AFFILIATION	GOTT
Tachikoma	VEHICLE OF CHOICE	Donnerschlag
The Laughing Man	ARCH ENEMY	Alv & Dvergr
Computer Shopper	FAVORITE MAGAZINE	*Vogue*

ÉCLAIR & LUMIERE (KIDDY GRADE): These girls work for the Galactic Organization of Trade and Tariffs as 'Encounter of Shadows' operatives, giving them license to hunt down and capture intergalactic criminals. A particular case that goes sour forces them to become fugitives, but this doesn't stop them from fighting evil (and looking damn good doing it).

MOTOKO KUSANAGI & BATOU (GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX): Major Kusanagi and Batou are the top two operatives within Section 9, an elite combat force that serves major amounts of butt-kicking to the deadliest of electronic terrorists. There's a great deal of trust between these two, so it's common to see them joke around in a "battle of the sexes" fashion while they're off the clock.

THE BATTLE BEGINS

"It's the perfect vintage!" Lumiere exclaims, pressing the bottle of red wine against her chest as if it were a newborn baby. Her partner, Éclair, walks alongside her with a thoroughly exhausted look upon her face as they make their way back to their ship, parked inconspicuously in a back alley where surely nobody would find it.

"Who'd have thought it would only be available on Earth?" Éclair covers her mouth as she yawns, but she's still happy to see Lumiere so excited, even if it was for a pretty silly reason.

As they near the ship, Éclair suddenly feels a shooting pain as a surprise bullet lodges itself in her shoulder! Grabbing Lumiere's hand, the two agents run for cover behind their ship's landing gears.

Damn, those two are fast, Batou's baritone voice echoes within Kusanagi's mind through their electronic communication link. *And pretty cute*, he adds.

The two Section 9 members are currently located on the rooftops of two different buildings nearby, sent to investigate numerous reports of a suspicious unidentified jet in the area.

Focus, snaps Kusanagi curtly. I'm moving in to detain them. Cover me!

Roger that, Major!

Kusanagi somersaults off of the building and lands just as a stream of energy along the ground makes contact with her. Warnings scream in her mind as all of her body's firewalls are breached. *Batou, watch out!*

"Major!" yells Batou aloud, leaping from his cover to rescue the paralyzed Motoko, but is stopped short when Éclair bursts at him; he barely ducks a punch far more powerful than her size indicates.

The two trade punches and kicks, while Motoko fights the assailant in her mind. Lumiere must concentrate as Motoko tries desperately to rewrite and close her brain to the girl, but she's no match for Lumiere's superhuman ability. Motoko can only utter a curse before Lumiere gives her brain a small shock, enough to knock her out for the next hour.

THE WINNAH:

"Major!" screams Batou again, as Motoko slumps to the ground. It's all the time Éclair needs to whip out her lipstick, and lassoing it around the huge Section 9 member to render him immobile.

"Don't worry; she's not hurt," smiles Éclair to Batou, who only grunts. As the ES members walk back to Donnersclag, Éclair winces at her bullet wound. "I hope that wine is worth it."

"You have no idea," sighs Lumiere.

Who do you want to see fight? e-mail us your ideas at AnimeInsider@aol.com!

Grave in the Bird SAC © Bandai. Kiddy Grade © Funimation

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A.I. FIVE

THE TOP 5 REASONS YOU'LL LOVE THIS SERIES

STELLVIA

ENTER THE SPACE RACE AS EARTH STRUGGLES TO STOP A REAL DEATH STAR

The fate of humanity is in the hands of teenagers. Again.

Sound familiar? Think again! *Stellvia* (released in 2003 in Japan as *Stellvia of the Universe*) was voted one of the Top 10 anime of the year according to Japanese fans, and that's not because it follows the same old formula.

It's 2356, and almost all of humanity is already dead, killed by a supernova called the First Wave nearly two centuries ago. The bad news is that the same supernova's second shockwave is coming—quick—and it's even bigger, badder and deadlier than the last. The remaining population is still scrambling to find a way to survive, but there are so few people left that even kids are drafted into the Great Mission, the crucial step in Earth's salvation. Enter Shima Katase—a young teen whose programming skills have landed her a role onboard the Stellvia, one of the six space stations standing between Earth and annihilation.

In this tale of Shima and her comrades' struggle to save humanity, director Tatsuo Sato and studio Xebec (*Shaman King*, *Mao-Chan*) have created a sci-fi story that's as entertainingly epic as it is intensely personal. If you still haven't planned to set a course for the stars of *Stellvia* when Geneon releases it stateside this September, here are five reasons you should.

SPACE CASES When class is dismissed, the Stellvia crew enjoys a little time in vacuum.

1. AN ANIME CLICHÉ THAT BREAKS THE MOLD

Internationally lauded director Sato has already mastered sci-fi with the fan-favorite *Nadesico*, and entertained legions with *Azumanga Daioh*. As writer and director of *Stellvia*, he takes the best parts of both and injects the tired teens-in-space genre with fresh blood. By focusing on the characters and making the setting as believable as possible, *Stellvia* is nothing if not fresh. Sato has created a show as clever as *Nadesico* but as personal and moving as *Azumanga Daioh*.

2. IT'S 'THE O.C.' GONE ANIME

There's really no such thing as a realistic anime series about kids. If *real* teens were put in charge of saving the earth, they'd freak out—which is what they do in *Stellvia*! Like the hit Fox series *The O.C.*, the Stellvia crew ages, fighting hormones and inexperience as well as discriminating adults and the encroaching threat of adolescent insanity. Best of all, the masterful writing sounds like you're back in your High School lunchroom—the dialogue so conveys the reality of the teenage existence, it might hit too close to home.

3. SOME SERIOUSLY SATISFYING SCI-FI

If you're a serious space case, then *Stellvia* is the show for you. Perfect for technophiles and technophobes alike, the sci-fi babble that usually makes other series incomprehensible has been handled with grace and clarity in *Stellvia*. The technology featured in the show (see sidebar) is believable, totally awesome and best of all, understandable. Even the planet-wide shield humanity hopes will block the supernova is explained *and makes sense*. And don't worry, if you're not into sci-fi...

GREAT SHIMA Shima openly expresses her grief at having missed the last bus.

4. IT'LL ROMANCE YOUR SPACESUIT OFF

Oh, the drama! The relationships in *Stellvia* are sure to touch even the blackest of hearts. Watching Shima meet, fall for and fight with fellow crewmate Kouta Otoyama is like watching an intergalactic version of *His & Her Circumstances*. The romance is so natural, so touching and so realistically messy that you'll be rooting for them to get together rather than praying for the survival of humanity.

5. TWO WORDS: SPACE NINJAS

The green-haired, masked Shirogane Jinrai may look like an idiot, but if he doesn't want to be seen, you can't find him. As the space-bound ninja of the *Stellvia* crew, Jinrai has no laser katana, no electricity-spewing throwing stars—and he doesn't need them, as the teacher skulks about the Stellvia, hiding in shadows, appearing out of nowhere and basically creeping out all the kids. His weapon is his comedic timing, which he wields silently and to devastatingly hilarious effect.

Contributing writer Dillon Font has never seen a space ninja, but was once mugged by a cosmic karate brown belt.

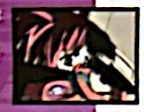
KOUTA & SHIMA

SPACE CADETS

FOR THE KIDS OF 'STELLVIA,' SAVING HUMANITY IS JUST HOMEWORK

SHIMA KATASE: All Shima wanted to do was go into space, and her dream was realized upon her acceptance into Stellvia. Discovered to be a genius in computers and logic, she ends up being the cornerstone in Earth's defense plans.

KOUTA OTOYAMA: Quiet and reserved, Kouta becomes the academic star of Stellvia, drawing the attention of the highest officers. Kouta falls for Shima, and together they work to protect their home, Earth.



ARISA GLENNORTH—Shima's roommate and best friend, Arisa is insanely energetic and friendly. Not particularly good at anything, she strives to find her strength, lending aid to the upcoming Great Mission.

AYAKA MACHIDA—One of the top upperclassmen, Ayaka is an incredibly talented pilot. She'll do absolutely whatever it takes to remain number one, even if it means taking down the competition...

YAYOI FUJISAWA—Yayoi knows a lot about how Stellvia works, as this is her second try at going through the program. What circumstances led to her repeating the grade remain unknown. ■ DF

TECH SPECS

THE SCI-FI GOODIES OF 'STELLVIA'

FOUNDATIONS: Serving as colonies, training schools and military bases, the six Foundations are the space stations responsible for our survival. Earth Foundation Stellvia serves as the crucial last stand for humanity's survival.

INFINITY: "Infi" for short, the Infinity is the height of human technological advancement: a human-shaped spaceship. Built as one of the only weapons of war in existence, Infinity eventually becomes the flagship of Earth's salvation.

ORA-AVIS MACHINES: Individual space travel is done through these lithe, stylish ships. The Biancas are reserved as training vessels, while the Katie Model makes up the main force in Earth's defenses.

THE GREAT WALL: Earth's defense plan against the final shockwave lies in a complex electric barrier system. If enough coverage and energy is used at different points in the solar system, the shockwave will be weak enough that it'll pass Earth harmless. That's the plan, anyway... ■ DF

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FLASH IN JAPAN

THE LATEST HOT SHOW AMERICANS CAN'T SEE...YET.

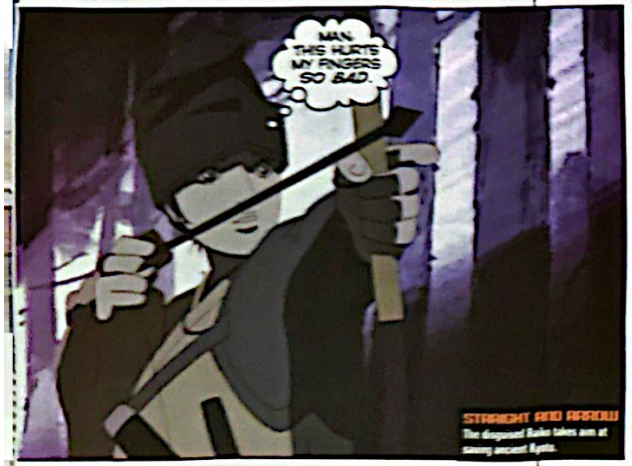
OTOGI ZOUSHI

COOL JAPANESE HISTORY THE PRODUCTION I.G WAY

The year: 972 A.D. The place: Kyoto, the capital of Japan. The problem: famines, plagues and whispers of rebellion against an increasingly indifferent aristocracy, populated by a brand-new class of warriors called samurai and a pack of mystic priests called Onmyoji who struggle for absolute political control.

Welcome to *Otogi Zoushi*. While it's the name of the newest TV series from the acclaimed studio Production I.G (*Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*, *Love Hina*), it's also Japan's equivalent to the tales of King Arthur. Set in the Heian period, known as a cultural renaissance but also for its political and social inequalities, the historical Otogi Zoushi are short stories written in the 15th and 16th centuries. The series draws on specific Otogi Zoushi about samurai Minamoto no Raiko and his companions in their quest to rid medieval Kyoto of demons. These tales chronicled the myriad adventures of Raiko's heroic band as they endeavored to save the nation. The only difference between the Arthurian legends and the Otogi Zoushi (aside from, you know, the whole Anglo-Saxon thing) is that for Otogi Zoushi, the people are all real!

In Production I.G's take, which premiered on July 6, Kyoto's Imperial Court orders Raiko to find a legendary jewel rumored to hold the power that could save the country from its ills. But when Raiko himself falls ill sick with the plague, his youngest sister Hikaru disguises herself as her samurai brother and sets out on a mission to locate the gem.



STRAIGHT AND ARROW
The disguised Raiko takes aim at saving ancient Kyoto.

Rather than following the old stories verbatim, the series uses the legendary adventures chronicled by the Otogi Zoushi to flavor the action. Raiko is protected by her faithful bodyguard, Watanabe no Tsuna (in the stories, one of Raiko's generals). Later in the series she's joined on her quest by onmyoji Abe no Seimei (famed mystic and astronomer) and the handsome Mansaikaru, encountering untold danger in their search for the jewel. The real catch happens when Hikaru starts to fall for Mansaikaru—but can't risk revealing her true identity!

If you're intimidated by all this history, don't be—Production I.G promises it'll be as entertaining as the original stories. "It focuses on the heart-rending feelings of a girl, but with the exciting sword battles of a Japanese period drama," suggests scriptwriter Yoshiki Sakurai, who last penned episodes of *GITS:SAC*. "Hikaru is interesting because she can't reveal her true identity or nature. She needs to lie about her feelings and fight against others. I feel for the way in which she struggles with herself—mentally and psychologically."

Otogi Zoushi has already premiered to rave reviews, and between its epic adventure and the fact it's made by Production I.G, you can bet your bottom yen *Otogi Zoushi* will be licensed for America as soon as I.G says it's okay. Until then, you'll have to settle for daydreaming in history class.

Tokyo correspondent Andrez Bergen once journeyed across Shibuya to find a magic bulb of light to save his kitchen from darkness.

AT A GLANCE

OTOGI ZOUSHI

AIRING: Wednesdays at 1:50 a.m. on Nippon TV
STUDIO: Production I.G
DIRECTOR: Mizuho Nishikubo (*Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* sequence director, *Video Girl Ai*)
STORY: Yoshiki Sakurai (*Ghost In The Shell: Stand Alone Complex*)
ORIGINAL CHARACTER CONCEPT: Shou Tajima (*Kill Bill*)
CHARACTER DESIGNER/ANIMATION DIRECTOR: Kazuchika Kise (*Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* & *Blood: The Last Vampire*)
CAST: Minamoto no Hikaru: Fumie Mizusawa (Kiri Marriatte in *Divergence Eve*); Watanabe no Tsuna: Kenta Miyake (Tsume in *Wolf's Rain*); Abe no Seimei: Kan Tokumaru (Danton in *Vampire Hunter D*); Mansairaku: Shinichirou Miki (Kurz Weber in *Full Metal Panic*, Mizuki-sensei in *Naruto*)

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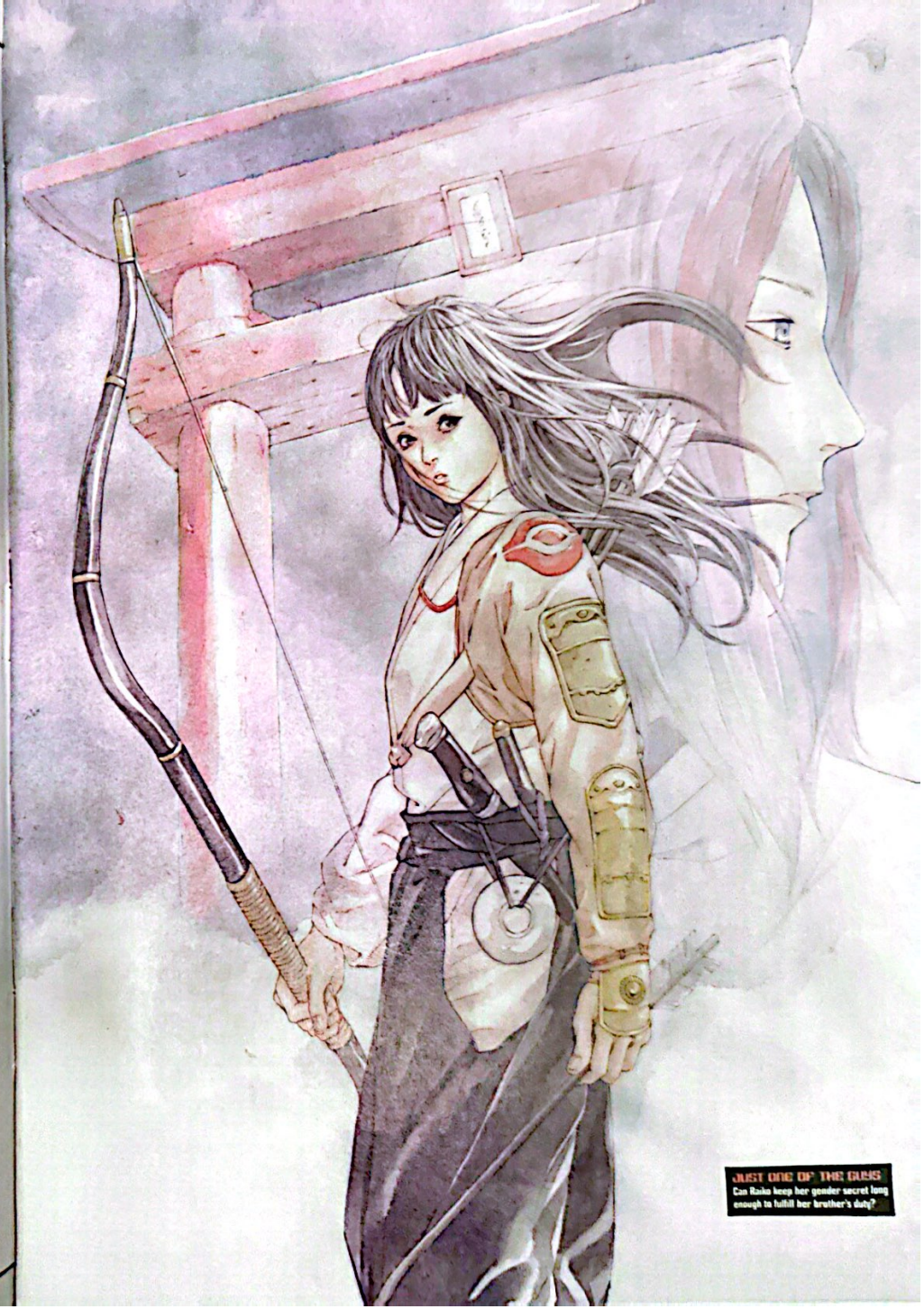

JUST ONE OF THE GUYS
Can Raiko keep her gender secret long enough to fulfill her brother's duty?

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PRESENT TENSE Clockwise from top: Sango, Miroku, Inuyasha and Kagome would be even more worried if they knew what's in store!

BRING ON THE BAD GUYS

By Rebecca Byrdy

Take a look into Inuyasha's terrifying future and see the enemies that could bring him to his knees!

He's beloved by thousands of fangirls. He's a TV star on both sides of the Pacific. Heck, he even wields the most powerful sword in all of feudal Japan. But it still sucks to be Inuyasha.

Why? Because as powerful as anime's favorite dog-demon is, he's not been able to defeat the evil Naraku in any of the 70-some episodes of *Inuyasha* that have aired on Cartoon Network so far. The bad news is that over 160 *Inuyasha* episodes have aired in Japan—and Naraku is *still* scheming like mad to get a hold of the shards of the Sacred Jewel. To make matters worse, for all the demons Inuyasha, time-traveling schoolgirl Kagome and their crew have vanquished, the enemies they have yet to face make Naraku and Inuyasha's full-demon brother Sesshomaru look like puppies!

Needless to say, if you want to keep Inuyasha's adventures a surprise, you'd better stop reading now! If you want to see the future, all you have to do is read on, but be warned—the future isn't pretty!

THE CAT CLAN

First appears in episode 75

BIO: Fifty years ago, the Cat Clan (or *Hyounekozoku* in Japanese) was a powerful family that threatened to take over Japan. Inuyasha's father and brother Sesshomaru had other ideas; their father defeated Oyakata and sealed him away, forcing the Cat Clan to scatter. Over the years, clan members Koura, Shuran, Shuuran and Karren regroup with the intention of not only exacting their revenge upon Sesshomaru and his half-brother Inuyasha, but to also free Oyakata from his forced slumber. By capturing Kagome and using her collection of Sacred Jewel shards, these cats are able to bring their leader back to face off against the demon dog brothers and their companions.

POWERS: Koura wields ice magic, Shuuran controls flames, Karren uses the elements of earth, and Shuran can summon lightning. Oyakata's power is being gigantic and ridiculously strong.

MOST DASTARDLY DEED: When Oyakata is freed, he requires flesh and souls to rejuvenate his powers. The good guys fend him and the other cat demons off, so in an act of treachery he consumes the souls of his own family to feed his hunger!

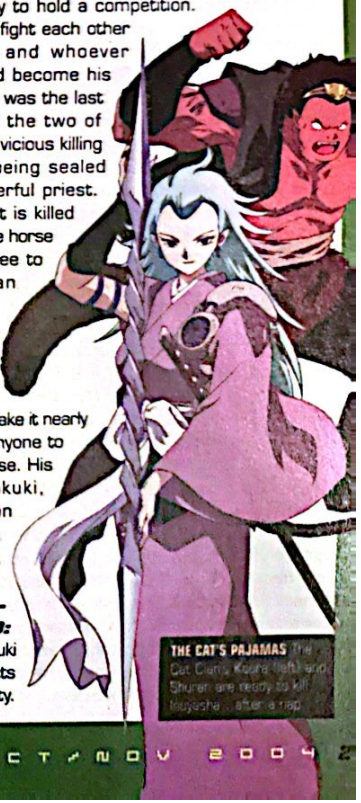
ENTEI AND RENGOKUKI

First appear in episode 141

BIO: Entei, a proud and highly sought after demon horse, decided one day to hold a competition. Everyone would fight each other to the death and whoever remained would become his rider. Rengokuki was the last remaining and the two of them went on a vicious killing spree before being sealed away by a powerful priest. When the priest is killed by Hakudoshi, the horse and rider are free to terrorize Japan once more.

POWERS: Entei's lightning-fast speed and earth shattering energy attacks make it nearly impossible for anyone to damage this horse. His rider, Rengokuki, wields a weapon that unleashes fireballs at his enemy.

MOST DASTARDLY DEED: Entei and Rengokuki love to commit acts of random cruelty.



THE CAT'S PAJAMAS The Cat Clan's Karren (left) and Shuran are ready to kill Inuyasha ... after a nap.

Inuyasha © Rumiko Takahashi / Shogakukan • Sunrise • Yomiuri TV 2000, 2004

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On one of their rides, they find a small, peaceful village, and kill everyone in it—just for kicks.

HAKUSHIN

First appear in episode 112

BIO: In life, Hakushin was a powerful priest who devoted his life to healing the sick and protecting the nearby village. On his death bed, Hakushin decided to become a living Buddha to protect the villagers even after death. In his final moments of life, however, Hakushin realized that he didn't want to die, and resented the villagers for a wasted life... which was when Naraku slithered in and offered him a chance to live again as his servant. Utterly corrupted by a shard of the Sacred Jewel given to him by Naraku, Hakushin used his new-found powers to protect Naraku, wounded from a previous encounter with Kagome and Inuyasha...as well as attack Inuyasha himself!

POWERS: As a living Buddha, Hakushin has immense holy powers at his disposal, the most notable one being a barrier that can purify any demon until nothing remains.

MOST DASTARDLY DEED: Hakushin's evil is by proxy—because of his protective barrier, Naraku had enough time to not only recover from his wounds but also grow in strength and obtain a new body, enabling him to commit countless more misdeeds.

HAKUDOSHI

First appears in episode 124

BIO: After Naraku's rebirth at Mount Hakurei, Naraku's servant Kagura flees with a mysterious baby in her arms. However, shortly after their escape the baby begins to order Kagura around—and start possessing priests in an attempt to find the final shard of the Sacred Jewel! One priest tries to strike back at the evil baby, and manages to separate it into two halves. One of the halves reforms, takes an older appearance, and names himself Hakudoshi! This spawn of Naraku is as evil and powerful as Naraku himself, and equally obsessed with recovering the Sacred Jewel. After obtaining the demon horse Entei, they roam the countryside, murdering anyone who steps in their path.

THE CAT'S MEOW Cat Clan members Karren (left) and Shuran can't be sated with lasagna, Garfield-style.

...the spawn of Naraku, Hakudoshi is armed with incredible speed and strength, making him a fearless fighter—but he has a cunning intellect as well.

MOST DASTARDLY DEED: While destroying demons who cross his path, Hakushin mercilessly beheads a whole gang of demons, including one peaceful one, then laughs gleefully as the headless monster wanders into a village and is beaten to death by the villagers.

BAD TO THE BONE Compared to these other enemies, Inuyasha's brother Sesshomaru seems like a puppy...demon.

HOSENKI THE ELDER

First appears in episode 155

BIO: The late Hosenki was an old friend of Inuyasha's father, and was the creator of the magical black pearl that allowed Inuyasha and Sesshomaru to visit their father's grave. In an attempt to protect the final shard from evil, Hosenki consumed the shard himself—a bad idea, as it corrupted him. Hosenki waits in Inuyasha's father's graveyard, destroying anyone who tries to steal the precious shard.

POWERS: Known as the jewel demon, Hosenki unleashes a flood of diamond spears upon his enemies.

MOST DASTARDLY DEED: The unsuspecting Inuyasha is happy to see his father's friend, but he's far less happy when dozens of Hosenki's spears tear through his flesh, nearly putting him in his own grave!

FELINE FURY Dyakata is proof of what happens when you don't spay and neuter your pets.

HOSHIONI AND THE HEAVENLY BEASTS

First appear in episode 137

BIO: Long ago, Hoshioni and his lover Sukione, a human priestess, fought alongside each other to destroy the demons that plagued their countryside. Desiring more power, Hoshioni ordered the halberd of Heaven and Earth created. Realizing that the weapon brought out Hoshioni's demon side, Sukione sacrificed herself to seal Hoshioni away and split the weapon into two. Now Hoshioni has returned with his minions—four ninjas, named after the legendary Heavenly Beasts—to reclaim his weapon.

POWERS: These four have abilities that relate to their namesakes: Genbu's crushing blow, Suzaku's flames, Seiryuu's sharp scale attack, and Byakko's claws. Hoshioni's power lies within his weapon, the Halberd of Heaven and Earth, which holds inestimable power.

MOST DASTARDLY DEED: Hoshioni kidnaps Kagome to force her to repair the Halberd, but the evil swordsman has no problem using the teenage girl as a human shield to prevent Inuyasha and crew from stopping him.

CANNON FODDER The Shichinintai's Renkotsu is all evil on the inside, all flame cannon on the outside.

PRINCESS ABI AND TEKKEI

First appear in episode 147

BIO: Princess Abi has been stealing people's blood, but she thinks it's for a good cause. He mother, Tekkei, has been poisoned, and they only way to cure her is with plenty of blood. In order to procure it, Abi sends out her legion of birds—huge, blood-sucking, pterodactyl-like birds—to terrorize the countryside, burn whole villages the ground and suck the villagers dry.

POWERS: Abi can create fire from thin air, while her mother's massive size and giant appetite take care of any enemies in their way. Plus, did you read the part about their army of blood-sucking birds?

MOST DASTARDLY DEED: Thinking that Naraku is hiding something within a particular town, Abi attacks it and kills every man, woman, and child in an attempt to root out the secret.

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THE GREAT ESCAPES

Why won't Naraku just die already?

For over 160 episodes, Inuyasha and Kagome have chased the villain Naraku, and nearly killed him on countless occasions. Naraku has always managed to slip away at the last instant, to torment our heroes for another season. Here are his closest calls!

PUPPET SHOW (Ep. 25)

After learning that Naraku tricked Sango and that it was he who killed off her family, Inuyasha slices Naraku's head off with his fearsome Tetsusaiga sword.

THE ESCAPE: It wasn't Naraku at all! The coward was lounging in his temple while one of his Naraku puppets did the dirty work for him.

BULLSEYE (Ep. 30)

Tracking him to his castle, the crew fight Naraku, who traps them with poison gas. Kagome fires off two purifying arrows straight into Naraku's body.

THE ESCAPE: The arrows hit and severely wound Naraku, but he has enough energy left to flood the area with more poison gas and sneak away.

SIBLING RIVALRY (Ep. 81)

Sick of Naraku's constant meddling, Inuyasha and Sesshomaru temporarily join forces to beat Naraku within an inch of his life.

THE ESCAPE: A good thing can't last—while the two brothers argue about who gets to deliver the killing blow, the severely beaten Naraku flees.

DOG PILE (Ep. 157)

At their father's graveyard, Inuyasha and Sesshomaru team up again and combine their assault with one of Kagome's arrows to create an attack that would definitely destroy Naraku forever!

THE ESCAPE: At the last instant, Naraku opens a portal to the living world, where the arrow follows him. Unfortunately, the arrow hits Hakudoshi instead. Foiled again! ■ RB

SINISTER SEVEN From top (but not from evilness): Kyokotsu, Ginkotsu, Renkotsu, Suikotsu, Jakotsu, Bankotsu and Mukotsu.

THE SHICHININTAI

First appear in episode 102

BIO: The Shichinintai were formed during the most brutal period in the Warring Era. Originally seven extraordinary humans—Kyokotsu, Jakotsu, Mukotsu, Renkotsu, Bankotsu, Ginkotsu and Suikotsu—they bonded to form a family of assassins that took any job so long as it paid well and gave them a chance to kill plenty of people. Their ruthlessness earned them the distrust of their employer, who betrayed and killed them. Out of fear and respect for the 'brothers,' the former employer buried their remains at the bottom of Mount Hakurei. Needing to distract Inuyasha while he recovers inside the mountain, Naraku resurrects the Shichinintai by giving one shard to each of the assassins, and two for their leader, Bankotsu. Desiring nothing more than to kill again, the Shichinintai gladly accept the chance to live once more.

POWERS: Kyokotsu, the massive giant, relies on brute strength while Ginkotsu's strength comes from his wide of western weapons. Renkotsu spawns flame as easily as Mukotsu wields his assortment of deadly poisons. The final three depend on weapons for their strength: Jakotsu has a snake-like sword, Suikotsu wields metal claws and Bankotsu uses his huge sword, the Banryu, and its Ryuuraisen lightning attack.

MOST DASTARDLY DEEDS: There's plenty of 'em: Jakotsu comments on how cute Inuyasha's dog ears are and vows to cut them off; faux doctor Suikotsu murders his patients; and Renkotsu is so low he steals the Jewel shards from his own brothers, killing them, for his own gain!

N.Y.-based freelance writer Rebecca Bundy's most dastardly deed: spoiling her dinner with ice cream! The horror!

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HIT AND RUN

VICTIMS OR SUSPECTS? ANIME INSIDER INVESTIGATES THE UNUSUAL CHARACTERS OF SATOSHI KON'S NEWEST SMASH 'PARANOIA AGENT'

By Mike Toole

Satoshi Kon wants you beaten. The critically acclaimed anime movie director (*Perfect Blue*, *Tokyo Godfathers*) has loosed a maniac on the Tokyo streets. If you see a kid wearing a baseball cap, holding an aluminum baseball bat and hurtling towards you on golden rollerblades, then you know to run—or sit down and watch *Paranoia Agent*.

After three hit films, the master of psychological suspense anime created his first TV series with the 13-episode *Paranoia Agent* in 2004, and fans will not be disappointed. This cerebrally twisted series follows the attacks by a bat-wielding kid the media dubs the "Lil' Slugger"—but it's no open-and-shut case. as it turns out, the assault victims are related and most of them have plenty of reason to have caused the attacks themselves!

Since Kon's works usually raise more questions than answers, we investigated the suspects ourselves to give you guys our verdict on what really happened. Of course, you can make your own call when Geneon Entertainment brings *Agent* to the U.S. in October.

Be warned! This may contain some spoilers, so if you want to keep from being assaulted with *Paranoia Agent*'s plot, read no further! Plus, this is merely our analysis! Only Satoshi Kon himself knows the full secrets behind the Lil' Slugger—and asking him might get you an aluminum bat to the noggin.

HARUMI CHOUNO (Ep. 3)

HER DEAL: An attractive girl, Harumi is Yuuichi Taira's private tutor. After hours, she argues relentlessly with Maria, a free-wheeling prostitute who happens to share Harumi's body, thanks to Harumi's multiple personality disorder! She battles her floozy alter-ego relentlessly, getting more and more desperate as she prepares to get married—but Maria seems to have the upper hand. Her therapist can't seem to help, but that's okay—her problem is nothing that an aluminum bat to the back of the head can't cure.

OUR VERDICT: Harumi's problem is certainly unique, and her two personalities truly hate each other, but it wouldn't make any sense for her to fabricate an attack. She's trying desperately to draw attention away from herself.

MASAMI HIRUKAWA (Ep. 4)

HIS DEAL: He has a nice job as district chief of police, a devoted wife and charming daughter, and a newly-built home. He also enjoys trading stories with the local yakuza, getting drunk as a skunk, and sleeping with expensive prostitutes (Maria is his favorite). Driven to extreme circumstances by his relationship with the mob, Hirukawa is clocked by Lil' Slugger one night while prowling the streets.

OUR VERDICT: As shady as Hirukawa's background is, it seems much too convenient that the Slugger took him out. More likely is that one of his mob "buddies" took a bat to him, and he used the Slugger story for cover.

TAEKO HIRUKAWA (Ep. 6)

HER DEAL: Inspector Hirukawa's daughter Taeko is stable and happy—her parents provide for her every need. Still, she yearns for the past; even though her family's old apartment was cramped and poor, she misses it. One day while preparing a surprise for her dad, Taeko discovers an awful secret—a secret that drives a wedge between herself and her family. Now instead of resenting her family's new house, Taeko actively wants to destroy it. Be careful what you wish for, Taeko, because you just got smacked with a bat!

OUR VERDICT: It's hard to take Taeko's word for anything, because after waking up in the hospital, she can't remember anything. However, it seems more likely she'd take the bat to her family before her self—she seems to be telling the truth.

MRS. KAMOHARA (Ep. 8)

HER DEAL: The wife of a famous screenwriter, Mrs. Kamohara attempts to socialize with

Paranoia Agent © Satoshi Kon • MADHOUSE • Paranoia Agent Committee

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CRITICAL MASS

MAJOR MOVIE CRITICS WEIGH IN ON SATOSHI KON'S FLICKS

If you're looking for another reason to check out *Paranoia Agent*, maybe the critical acclaim Kon's films have garnered will sway you. *A.I.* talked to some of the nation's top movie critics to get their thoughts on Kon's psychologically challenging films. MT

MILLENNIUM ACTRESS (DREAMWORKS SKG)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: Documentary filmmaker Genya Tachibana is about to interview the studio's greatest star, Chiyoko Fujiwara. Fujiwara's story is more than Tachibana and his bored cameraman Ida bargain for; as she traces her personal history as an actress, the two men find themselves literally drawn into her life—but how can even Chiyoko tell the difference between her real life and her movie roles?

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY:

"Millennium Actress is one of the few movies I've seen that seems utterly without precedent. It's a movie about movies, so there are echoes and bits of resonance that you can get from it, even without having seen the films from which it draws its inspiration. I felt like I knew where I was with a lot of its scenes and references." — A.O. Scott (*New York Times*)

CHIYOKO FUJIWARA

HI HO SILVER Chiyoko charges forth in one of *Millennium Actress*' flights of fantasy.

her apartment building. Lil' Slugger. Her tales are enjoyably creepy and far-fetched, but the other housewives prefer to make snide remarks and retell stale urban legends with Lil' Slugger cast as the central character—but the stories turn real when Mrs. Kamohara's husband is critically wounded by Lil' Slugger.

OUR VERDICT: Instead of mourning her husband's injury, Mrs. Kamohara seems to just talk about how it was all Lil' Slugger's fault. She's probably just looking for more stories to swap—even if she had to make 'em herself.

MAKOTO KOZUKA (Ep. 5)

HIS DEAL: The news reports that the Lil' Slugger had been caught, and he's grade school student Makoto Kozuka. But Makoto is also the Holy Warrior, a fearsome swordsman dedicated to saving people from horrible monsters! With his magic boots (rollerblades) and sword (bat), the Holy Warrior smites the terrible monsters (random bystanders) and restores peace to the land! The police humor him, but have a hard time cutting through his bizarre rhetoric.

OUR VERDICT: This kid is cleverer than he seems—he could be angling to plead insanity. There's no doubt that at some of the attacks are his fault, but which?

TSUKIKIRO SAGI (Ep. 1)

HER DEAL: The quiet Tsukikiro is a character designer whose cute 'n cuddly character Maromi has really taken off. Unfortunately for Tsukikiro, her bosses prod her relentlessly to come up with the next successful character. As the pressure mounts, Tsukikiro starts to imagine her Maromi doll talking to her—even giving advice...which is when a ratty kid on rollerblades bashes her leg with a bent aluminum bat before making off into the night!

OUR VERDICT: Only Tsukikiro saw her attacker, but its her description of the Lil' Slugger that's grabbed the media's attention. While violent, the attack certainly removed her deadline to create a new character. We don't trust her, because we don't trust Maromi!

NAYOKI SARUTA (Ep. 10)

HIS DEAL: This poor idiot is the office pariah at a struggling animation studio. The studio should be doing better, since they've just started work on a cartoon adaptation of Maromi, but the staff are undisciplined and quarrel constantly. Saruta is of absolutely no help to anyone, spending his time fouling up the work of others or sleeping on the job. His coworkers call him 'monkey' and give him trouble for his incompetence. Then they start turning up injured or dead, all at the hands of Lil' Slugger—while Saruta remains unscathed.

OUR VERDICT: Insulted and ignored, Saruta has all the reason in the world to hate his co-workers. Besides, why would Lil' Slugger choose to leave him alone?

YUUICHI TAIRA (Ep. 2)

HIS DEAL: A handsome, multi-talented schoolboy, Yuuichi's nickname is 'Ichi,' because he's number one, baby! Trouble comes because Ichi loves rollerblading to school and is great at baseball, so when stories of a kid on rollerblades beating people up with a bat start circulating, all of Ichi's friends and neighbors give him the cold shoulder. Yuuichi blames it on his rival Shogo, and becomes intensely paranoid. When Shogo is attacked by the Slugger, all fingers point to Yuuichi—so he's nothing but relieved when he's attacked himself!

OUR VERDICT: This kid is dirty. It's all too easy to believe he clocked the new kid to take the heat off of himself; plus the baseball cab and gold rollerblades seem more than a coincidence.

ZEBRA, FUYUMACHI & KAMOME (Ep. 8)

THEIR DEAL: "Zebra" is a tall, quiet man with a kind face and a ponytail. "Fuyubachi" is an older man with a mustache and a Ben Franklin haircut. "Kamome" is an adorable little girl. They've all agreed to commit suicide together, but Zebra and Fuyubachi are flummoxed both by Kamome's young age and by her dauntless, even cheerful attitude towards death. The trio can't really commit to the idea of offing themselves—they prefer to think about how cool it would be if the legendary Lil' Slugger showed up and punched their clocks himself. Then the Slugger obliges!

OUR VERDICT: These guys are weirdoes. There's no telling what they saw out in the woods—we don't trust any of 'em, especially the little girl. Plus, if they're willing to commit suicide, they're more than willing to beat themselves up with baseball bats.

THE OLD MAN

HIS DEAL: Seen in every episode, the old man begins the show by spouting seemingly random non-sequiturs—but during the episodes, this senile codger is scribbling incomprehensible mathematical equations in chalk on the sidewalk in front of the train station. Look closely, and you'll see his formulas appear to have to do with the Slugger's victims!

OUR VERDICT: Maybe he's senile, but he must know more than he's letting on! Besides, his crinkly hair kinda looks like the Lil' Slugger's, and he's about the right size...but can he rollerblade?

You can see freelance writer Mike Toole in gold rollerblades in his one-man production of Starlight Express.

CRITICAL MASS continued...

MAJOR MOVIE CRITICS WEIGH IN ON SATOSHI KON'S FLICKS

PERFECT BLUE (MANGA ENTERTAINMENT)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: Reluctantly forced out of the modestly popular singing trio CHAM by her agent, Mima Kirigoe tries her luck as a screen actress. Things quickly start to go all wrong for Mima—as her movie career flounders, a stalker appears who seems to know her every thought—while Mima's loosening grip on reality might cost her her life.

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY:

"Satoshi Kon definitely has that Hitchcockian precision—and as with Hitchcock, you get the feeling that Satoshi Kon can do almost anything effortlessly and elegantly. One other point of comparison might be Quentin Tarantino—not in mood or subject matter, but in the way that he's obviously such a visual and cinematic intelligence that he can filter many different styles and genres through his own story in a very smooth and masterful way." — A.O. Scott (*New York Times*)

CHAM

"The appeal of *Perfect Blue* is that of most psychological thrillers, except that being in animation gives it a wider palette to play with than most such films. If remade in live action, it would have to have a budget that wouldn't necessarily be feasible. It shows that animation can tell any number of different types of stories." — Luke Y. Thompson (*New Times*)

TOKYO GODFATHERS (COLUMBIA TRISTAR)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT: Gin, Hana, and Miyuki are three homeless people who have given up on life; Gin is an alcoholic failure; Hana, a washed-up drag queen; Miyuki, a troubled teenager. The discovery of a baby in a dumpster unexpectedly unites them and sends them on a Christmas quest to track down the baby's parents.

THE GODFATHERS Gin, Hana and Miyuki revel in horror at...you, apparently.

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY:

"(*Tokyo Godfathers*) is it's own thing, and comparing the film to other movies sells it short. The surface narrative brutally undercuts traditional seasonal stereotypes, yet by film's end familial bonds, albeit unconventional ones, have been solidified and affirmed. My favorite aspect of Satoshi Kon's films is that they've told me a story I did not expect and was not able to predict. When you see as many films as I do, the element of surprise counts for a lot." — Luke Y. Thompson (*New Times*)

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FORCE of HABIT

The only thing stopping an infernal invasion is one nun, several guns and a semi-reformed demon. Come join the "Chrono Crusade"

BY ZAC BERTSCHY

Say your prayers, because Rosette Christopher needs all the help she can get. As a nun in the Magdalan Order, Rosette's not teaching Sunday school classes. She's charged with the duty of exorcising demons—mainly through the liberal use of her special "Gospel" Bullets—throughout New York in the roaring '20s. She's helped by Chrono, a demon who is bound to Rosette's lifeforce. While this keeps Chrono's Demon form under control and his power restrained, it does have some serious repercussions—when he reverts to his true form, he saps a little more of Rosette's life away. Together they fight against a bevy of infernal nasties, not the least of which is a horrifying threat from Chrono's past that threatens to unravel the very fabric of life!

When Daisuke Moriyama's juxtaposition of action, tragedy and a devilishly cute nun debuted in *Monthly Dragon Magazine* in 2001 no prayers were necessary to turn it into a hit anime in 2003, thanks to wonder studio Gonzo. Now, ADV Films plans to indoctrinate anime fans this September, when *Crusade* hits American DVD.

For those that can't wait, we've looked under Rosette's habit (that's her nun headgear, you naughty kids) to find out *Chrono Crusade*'s secrets for this episode guide. Read on—you can count your blessings later!

SPOILER WARNING!
Chrono Crusade has more hidden secrets than the Vatican has locked in its basement, and this episode guide reveals them all! If you want to remain a Chrono Crusade virgin, read no further!

THE GOD SQUAD Rosette (left) and Chrono take no prisoners, but they will take tithings.

Chrono Crusade © Gonzo

Scanned with CamScanner

SUNDAY SCHOOL Chrono Delt, in full demon form! and Rosette might look cute, but they don't mess around.

1. PILOT

Under orders from stuffy head nun Sister Kate, Catholic exorcist Rosette Christopher and her infernal (but friendly) demon familiar Chrono take on a gigantic demon who's on the rampage at the harbor! Things look grim when the demon proves too strong for Rosette's special Sacred bullets, but a special new Catholic caliber—the Gospel bullet—takes him down in short order.

2. THE CONTRACTOR

Rosette's gun, outfitted with a new 'Spirit' bullet that contains an imprisoned demon, is stolen during battle. A stranger brandishing the gun uses the bullet to turn himself into a grotesque beastie that terrorizes the Order of Magdala's home base! Meanwhile, on a beach somewhere in the world, Rosette's missing brother Joshua single-handedly massacres the army of the demon Borzo...for his enigmatic (and undoubtedly evil) master, Aion!

3. APOSTLES

Rosette and Chrono are charged with defending Azmaria Hendric, a girl gifted with amazing healing powers; she's one of seven Apostles sent to Earth to do God's work. Pursued by the evil Viscount demon Relaie, Azmaria is captured after her erstwhile defenders are blown sky-high! To make matters worse, it's revealed by head Magdala honcho, Father Remington, that Rosette's brother Joshua was also an Apostle. Can things get any worse?

BAD HABIT: In one of Rosette's many instances of totally un-nun-like behavior, she cuts loose at a high-class casino, gambling and flirting with Chrono in a slinky red dress.

4. SINNERS

Relaie uses Azmaria's Apostle power to consume the energy in the Astral line, a plane of souls in the Earth's troposphere from which all life is created (and the place where demons get their power). Chrono bursts into his unfettered Demon form and locks horns with Relaie in a thrilling battle; just when the going gets rough and Chrono's infernal rear is about to be kicked, Rosette shatters Relaie's Astral container and blows his whole scheme.

5. MILITIA

A meeting with Sister Kate reveals that the demon Aion, who kidnapped Joshua, also needs Azmaria's power to launch his war against God! Rosette, eager to rescue her brother, is told that the only way she'll be allowed to investigate the Apostles is by suitably impressing Sister Kate with her ability and joining the Militia. Rosette passes the test with flying colors when she obliterates an evil Mind Eater demon who tries to corrupt Azmaria's pure soul!

6. JEWELSUMMONER

Rosette, Chrono and newly minted rookie exorcist Azmaria head downtown in pursuit of a demon, only to be beaten to the punch by Satella, a bounty hunter with the ability to summon a knight made of pure crystal. Rosette and Satella get along like oil and water, even though the two share a common problem: missing siblings! Before they can bond, an evil mummy surfaces in the park, requiring a serious Catholic smackdown.

BAD HABIT: Breaking one of many commandments, Rosette sees fit to call Satella... well, let's just say it rhymes with 'witch.'

7. THE DEMON

The vicious Aion finally shows his face, unleashing a plague of demons on Manhattan, breaking the Magdala's arcane, peace-keeping seal on the city! Rosette and crew struggle to keep Aion away from Azmaria, but he's just too powerful, easily smacking aside their defenses. Just before his claws can dig in to Azmaria's flesh, the Magdala Militia repairs the seal and banishes Aion... but only temporarily.

8. FALLING RAIN

Minister Remington is waylaid by a horde of possessed humans at Grand Central Station, and it's up to Rosette to save him. Little does she know it's a trap set by Rizel, a

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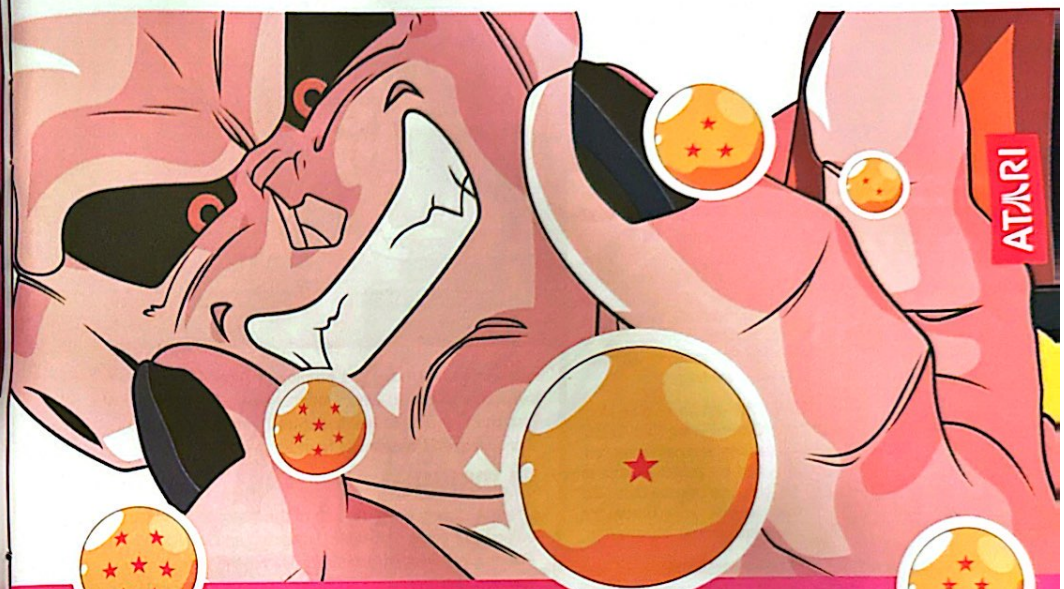

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HEAVEN & HELL

Although *Chrono Crusade* is packed to the pews with nuns, not everyone in the show is so pure of spirit. Here's a guide to the highs and lows of the *Chrono Crusade* cast!

THE POPE—Even the top brass at the Magdalan Order has to answer to someone; incidentally, it's the same guy every Catholic in the world has to answer to. Fortunately for the Pope, he only has one boss.

SISTER KATE—Matriarch of the Magdalan Order, Sister Kate keeps Rosette's fiery personality under control. While she publicly objects to Chrono's presence in the Order, she silently approves, letting Rosette and Chrono bust demons together.

ROSETTE CHRISTOPHER—The Magdalan Order's resident spitfire, Rosette's sloppy yet effective method of bringing demons to justice has earned her heroine status with some and pariah status with others.

CHRONO—A demon who betrayed a betrayer and wound up locked underground with his saintly lover, Chrono kicks butt for the Lord while maintaining his infernal power.

JOSHUA—The Apostle of Hope, Rosette's little brother and Aion's evil puppet, Joshua used to be a nice kid until Aion gifted him with powerful demon horns and turned him in to the spawn of Satan.

RELAIE—Aion's delusional [illegible] goes out of his way to [illegible] Apostle Armaria to further [illegible] crazy schemes.

AION—[illegible] demon hell-bent on [illegible] God's grip on the world and remaking the Earth into a "paradise" where only he makes the rules. He's quite a snappy dresser, too! ■ ZB

UNREPENTANT From left, Satella, Armaria and Rosette party down in old San Francisco.

spider demon under the employ of Aion! Cutting through the spider's wicked web, Rosette saves Remington's life—who then reveals to her that he's been hunting Joshua for four years and has finally found him!

9. JOSHUA

Rosette's crew visits the site of the Seventh Bell orphanage, where four years earlier, Aion attacked and kidnapped Joshua. Rosette reminisces about her kid brother, the two of them having found and rescued Chrono from incarceration within the underground tomb of Saint Magdalena. The three became fast friends, enjoying the halcyon days of youth... before Aion appeared and confronted Chrono about his past.

10. HORN

Rosette's shocking flashback continues! Aion offers the eternally weak Joshua something he can't refuse: the powerful demon horns he cut from Chrono's head, giving him all the evil power he could ever want! Joshua accepts, and in a rage of unchecked power, turns the entire orphanage to stone. Rosette, desperate to stop her brother, binds herself to Chrono and their pact begins... Chrono's power bursts forth, draining a tiny bit of Rosette's life.

11. GABRIEL HOUND

A demonic hound, summoned by a vengeful widow, is on the loose and grows larger with each consumed soul! Rosette takes off after the beast, only to wind up clashing once again with Satella; the two figure out that if they work together, the demons will come down a whole lot easier.

BAD HABIT: Last we checked, there wasn't anything in the bible about God's work being done on the back of a souped-up Chopper.

12. HOLY NIGHT

Intelligence from the west coast shows a flurry of demonic activity in San Francisco—but before Rosette can take off, Father Remington reminds her that Christmas is just around the corner! Chrono and Rosette stay behind, determined to

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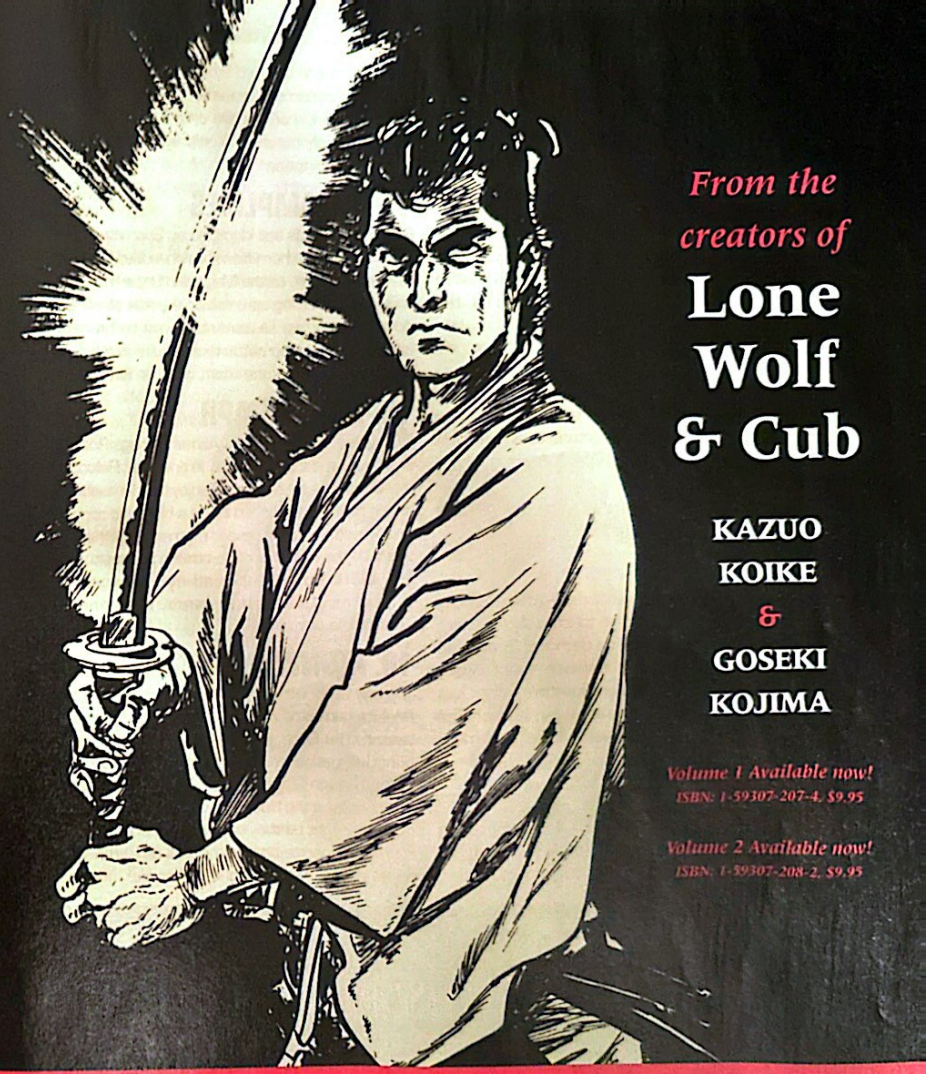

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SAMURAI EXECUTIONER 首斬り朝

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make the holiday special for Azmaria, whose fractured family history has resulted in a series of disappointing Christmases.

13. MARIONETTE TRAIN

Chrono, Rosette, Azmaria and an unexpected fourth passenger, Satella, are on a train bound for San Francisco when Rizel the spider demon makes a bid for revenge, desperate to win Aion's affections! Rosette and company make short work of the lovelorn arachnid, blasting her to little spider pieces.

BAD HABIT: Rizel takes a few swings at Rosette and makes short work of her dress, leaving her mostly naked for the rest of the episode.

14. INVOCATION

Rosette's crew arrives in San Francisco just in time for Chrono to come down with a fever. Unfortunately, nobody in town has any medicine for a demon, save an old fortune teller who tells Rosette that the only way to heal a demon's fever is with a kiss...which she furtively provides.

BAD HABIT: Rosette spends most of the episode in a dirty tarp...not exactly a Pope-approved outfit!

15. THE PURSUERS

Rosette and Chrono make a deal with a devil—more specifically, with Deufo, a demon desperate to stop Aion's plan, which spells doom for both humans and demons! Deufo also drops a bombshell—Rosette has Apostle powers too! A bloody mark in the shape of a cross appears on Rosette's wrist...just what's going on here? Meanwhile, in Aion's lair, his scheme is revealed: he intends on merging Heaven and Earth to make a world without God!

16. BELIEVER

Rosette and Chrono are hot on the trail of a devil-worshipping basket case who's been sacrificing locals to Aion. A disgruntled Satella beats them to the punch, only to get captured by the woman and one who massacred her family...and that he left her sister alive! Rosette and Chrono arrive on the scene and lodge a Gospel bullet squarely between Aion's eyes—only to have him shrug it off and disappear.

17. ACCOMPLICES

Rosette's wounds are identified as Stigmata wounds by Chrono, who recognizes them from his shrouded past. There's no time to reflect, though, as the Magdalen Order mobilizes against Aion's lieutenants, setting up a massive battle strategy to bring them down. Aion's two lieutenants prove to be nearly too much, causing a nail-biting battle that results in major losses for both sides. Aion's down one man, but that isn't about to stop him!

18. PHOTOGRAPH

Desperate for a little R&R, Azmaria drags Rosette, Chrono and Satella to a carnival in San Francisco. Reluctant to take the day off, our heroes wind up enjoying themselves in spite of the chaos they're entrenched in. On a hill overlooking the city, Chrono and Rosette share a tender moment together...a moment cut short by the arrival of none other than Joshua himself!

BAD HABIT: Rosette's dead-eye accuracy fails her at the carnival's shooting game, resulting in a string of unprintable obscenities.

19. ATONEMENT

The holy water hits the fan! Distracted by the corrupted Joshua, Rosette can't stop Azmaria from being kidnapped by Aion's lieutenant. The Ceremony of Atonement begins, with all seven apostles gathered under Aion's control. Joshua sends a bullet through Chrono's body, leaving him unable to stop Aion from releasing the hidden power in Rosette's body...who, it turns out, just might be the reincarnation of Saint Mary Magdalene! Helpless, Rosette breaks the seal on Chrono's true form, and he emerges, ready to fight for her life!

© Geneyoo

20. TEMPTATION

A vicious battle between Chrono and Joshua ends with Chrono tearing the horns from Joshua's head, which saves Joshua from his tormented destiny and turns Chrono instantly to stone. Rosette's limp body is carried off by Aion, who reveals that she's all he needs to create a world where neither God nor Satan has any control!

21. MARY MAGDALENE

A glimpse into Chrono's past reveals that his ill-fated romance with the original Saint Mary Magdalene was the catalyst for many things, not the least of which was Mary's death. Chrono and Mary sealed a pact that allowed Chrono to continue living in order to stop Aion's plan; the pact took Mary's life, but she went on to inhabit Rosette's body. Meanwhile, Aion has cursed Rosette, and intends on using her to enact his plan!

22. SAYONARA

Rosette, now a corrupted version of Saint Mary Magdalene under Aion's control, wanders the streets healing the sick in a bid to bring the populace to Aion's knees. Chrono reaches out to save her from Aion, only to be burned by her very touch—a move that Aion uses to set the crowd against Chrono and the very Magdalan Order that gives him sanctuary. Meanwhile, Satella and her sister Fiore, who wound up as Aion's evil puppet, wage an all-out battle that ends in their mutual demise.

23. NOISE

Aion's scheme comes to a crashing finale when the curse over Rosette is shattered by pure willpower. Weakened, Rosette gives what could be the last of her life force to Chrono, enabling him to revert to his true form! A swiftly-decided battle sees Aion cut in half and stabbed with his own horn, finally bringing his evil to an end. Father Remington arrives on the scene too late, however...Rosette and Chrono are nowhere to be found.

24. CHRONO

It's six months after the incident with Aion; the stock market in New York has crashed and World War II is imminent. During the last sunset on the last day of her life, Rosette Christopher lies crying in the arms of Chrono on a porch swing in an unknown field. The two of them die together, holding hands. Hope isn't lost, though; Azmaria watches over a newly restored Seventh Bell orphanage, carrying on in Rosette's name!

Associate editor Zac Bertschy is in critical condition after the A.I. staff subjected him to a near-fatal amount of nun puns.

ROSETTE & AZMARIA

NUN BETTER

WE RANK HISTORY'S BEST WOMEN OF THE HABITS

1. Rosette Christopher
Face it, folks—she's good with guns, protects folks from demons, and is cute as a button on Saint Michael's favorite sweater-vest.

2. The Flying Nun
Sally Field is so perky that strong gusts of wind allow her to fly through the countryside, spreading good deeds and good cheer. Like Mother Theresa with a jet pack.

3. Maria
The Sound of Music's crooning, problematic nun who married a man in uniform has always been one of our favorite things.

4. Sister Wendy
No other nun knows art history like Sister Wendy, whose wildly popular PBS series taught us all about Impressionism. Or something.

5. The Punching Nun
No man alive can resist the hilariously entertaining Punching Nun doll, but watch out for her mean left jab.

6. The Penguin
This ruler-wielding nun smacks Blues Brothers Jake and Elwood into an orphanage-saving mission that's amused countless college students since 1980.

7. The Singing Nun
One of a long line of over-specialized nuns of the '60s, this one sang not unreasonably preachy songs.

8. Warrior Nun Areala
Just like Rosette, she fought demons with guns and wore a highly inappropriate habit. But Areala doesn't pull it off quite as well as Rosette.

9. Nuns on the Run
Former Python Eric Idle and future Hagrid Robbie Coltrane bumble around for 89 terrifyingly unfunny minutes as crooks hiding from the cops as homely nuns.

10. Whoopi Goldberg
Whether by her crass sass or interminably musical numbers, Whoopi's two *Sister Act* movies surely line the road to heck. ZB

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GARDEN of GUNDAM

How director Mitsuo Fukuda nurtured a 'Seed' into the best Gundam series ever

Mitsuo Fukuda is not who he seems. Sure, he's hurled an entire galaxy into interstellar civil war. He's killed millions and disrupted the lives of millions more. But the funny thing is—he's a really nice guy.

The director of *Gundam Seed* smiles easily and keeps a tidy cubicle. In his glasses and jeans, he actually looks more like a friendly uncle than someone who would stage galactic warfare. But Fukuda's guilt is obvious in his episode of *Seed*, currently airing Saturdays on Cartoon Network. The main characters—on both sides of the war between the "Natural" humans of the Earth Alliance and the rebelling, genetically modified "Coordinators" of ZAFT—learn the high cost of war in each bloody episode, as the death toll mounts.

Perhaps because it's a no-holds-barred, graphic depiction of war and its price, Fukuda's reinterpretation of the original *Mobile Suit Gundam* series has won over hardcore Gundam fans and newcomers alike. Its epic storyline and sleek mecha designs have made *Seed* a favorite in Japan since it debuted in 2002, spawning best-selling toys, theme songs, merchandise, etc. It's all thanks to Fukuda, a self-professed Gundam fan who rose through the ranks at Sunrise, makers of all Gundam anime in Japan, to get the chance at the venerable franchise.

With the first DVD already out from Bandai Entertainment, *Anime Insider* figured it was high time to travel to "Anime Town," a.k.a. Kamigusa (so called because of the plethora of anime studios there), to visit Sunrise and grill Fukuda on the horrors of war—as well as the terrors of trying to remake one of Japan's most beloved anime.

by Robert Bricken

FRIENDS IN NEED Athrun Zala (left) and Kira Yamato (right) owe their bloody, angsty friendship to Fukuda.

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***ANIME INSIDER:* Gundam is arguably the biggest franchise in anime. Were you intimidated to take on a Gundam project?**

MITSUO FUKUDA: When I started, I knew that *Gundam Seed* was going to be a big, huge project, and compared to other projects I've done, it was easily twice the amount of pressure of a normal series. When starting the project, I was very nervous. It was a very tough year for me—a lot of work, a lot of pressure.

How much work?

I basically worked on the show all day every day—every hour of the day except to sleep. But sometimes when I slept, I even dreamt *Gundam Seed*. [smiling] There was no escaping it.

Was there pressure to create a series worthy of the Gundam name?

The big pressure was about being worried about making a weekly TV series—how to get it done on time, what the episode was going to be about, how to start on the next episode. It was just overwhelming, and because I was involved in every part pf the process, I never had time to think about the finished product. It was just work and work and work.

When did you know all that work was paying off?

While I was working on the show, I heard from other staff members that the toys were selling well, and the ratings were good, and so forth. But basically I was so busy making the series, I never paid much attention—I had no time to think about the final product until it was over.

Are you surprised how popular *Seed* became in Japan?

[shaking his head] I'm very surprised. It's hard to describe my emotions, but I think it's really just unbelievable. That's how I feel.

How did you come to Sunrise?

I started working at Sunrise in 1979, but my first work as a director was *Cyber Formula* in 1991. That was for TV, but I did the OVA too. In 1999, I worked on the *Gear Warrior Gendo*. And after that, I began working on *Gundam Seed*.

You never worked on any Gundam series before *Seed*?

No, I was working in Sunrise's second floor studios, on different robot anime shows. Down on the first floor, that's where all the people working on the Gundam series were. So whenever I had a chance, I ran downstairs to peek at what the Gundam people were doing!

Were you a Gundam fan?

[nods solemnly] I am a Gundam fan.

Did you have to fight to direct *Seed*, since you didn't have previous Gundam experience?

When I came work to Sunrise, Gundam had just become one of its most popular series. I came to work for Sunrise specifically for Gundam. When I heard about the *Gundam Seed* project, I ran to the president of the company and told him I was *very* interested in this show, that I wanted to do it. And after management discussions and so forth, thankfully the Sunrise people decided that I would be the perfect individual to direct the show.

How does one prepare to direct a Gundam series?

Before I began the project, I watched all the Gundam series. I tried to take out the important materials and details of the Gundam. My basic goal was to tell the Gundam story to modern Japanese kids.

What are the essential parts of a Gundam story?

There are three basic principles to making a Gundam story. The first point is there have to be battles, and the setting has to be a war. The second point is there has to be human drama, a human story—something that portrays a dream, a hope of humanity. That's why I put in the Coordinators in *Gundam Seed*—it's basically changing the original *Gundam*'s Newtype people into Coordinators.

The third point is there have to be Gundams, which means they've got to have those antennae. I think that if you've got those three things, you've got a Gundam series.

How much input did you have on the actual storyline as the series' director?

For the characters and general storyline, I made them, but

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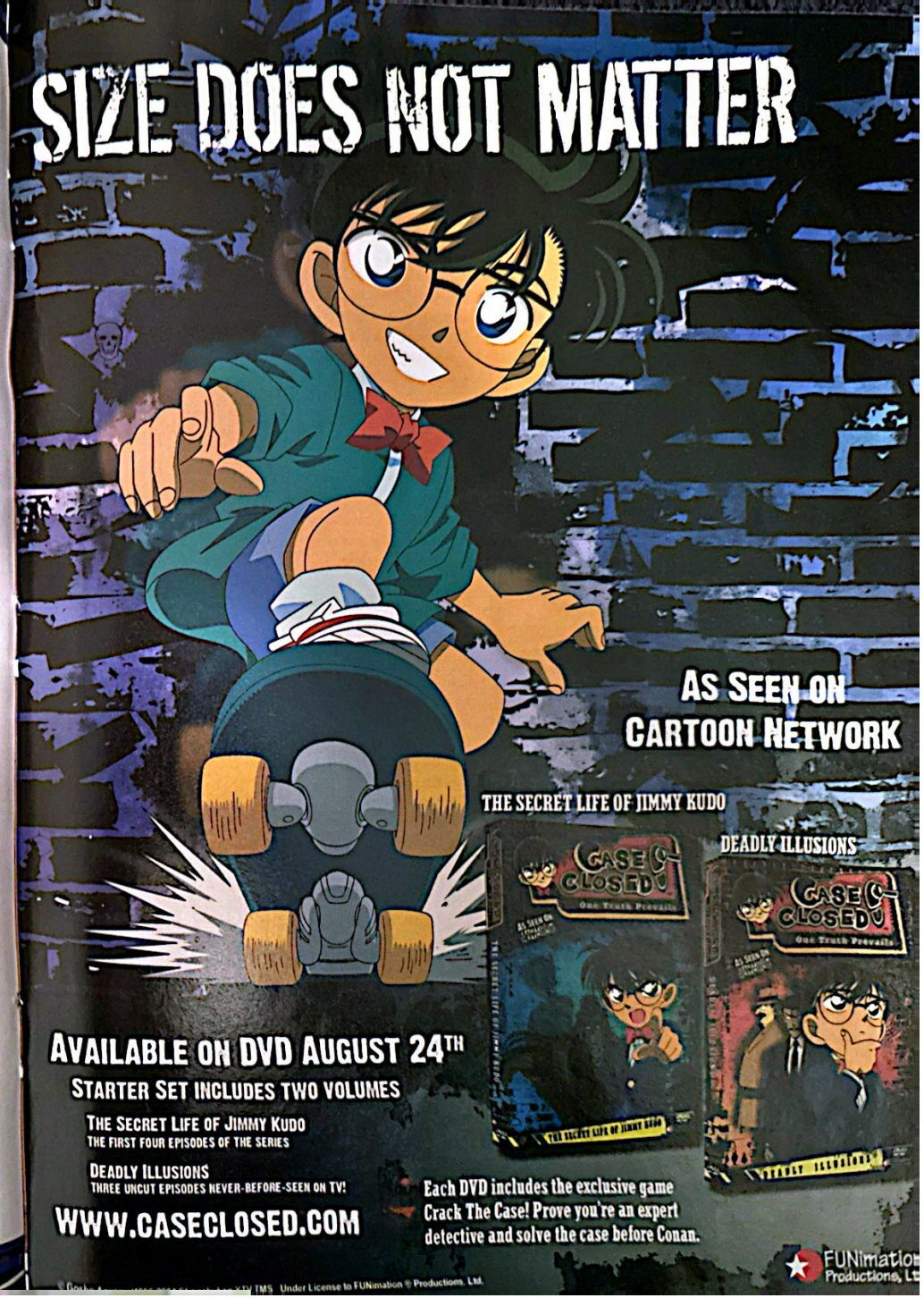
VITAL STATS

MITSUO FUKUDA

AGE: 43
CREDITS: Director of *Cyber Formula GPX*, *Gear Warrior Dendo* and *Gundam Seed*
FAVORITE NON-GUNDAM ANIME: *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Space Cruiser Yamato*
FAVORITE U.S. FILMS: "The Star Trek and Star Wars movies. I have a whole bunch of favorites, but mainly it's those two."
FAVORITE GUNDAM SERIES: *Char's Counterattack*. "I was dying to see the ending of Amuro and Char's fight."
HOBBIES: "Making plastic models. When I was a child, I made plastic models of battleships and stuff like that."
FAVORITE GUNDAM MECHA: Zaku
FAVORITE *GUNDAM SEED* GUNDAM: "Freedom Gundam. Because it looks so, so cool."
FAVORITE STAR TREK CHARACTER: Spock
CURRENT PROJECT: The sequel to *Gundam Seed*, *Destiny*! See page 73 for more info! ■



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STAR TREK VS. GUNDAM

WHICH HEMISPHERE'S SCI-FI FRANCHISE *REALLY* RULES THE GALAXY?

Gundam lore is Japan's most venerable science fiction franchise, which is why it's compared so often to Star Trek, America's most venerable sci-fi franchise. With that in mind, we just couldn't help ourselves, so we stacked these two heavyweights up against one another.

STAR TREK	GUNDAM
BEST CATCHPHRASE	
"KAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!" —Captain Kirk, *Star Trek II*	"The God of Death has returned from hell!"—Duo Maxwell, *Gundam Wing*
FASHION FAUX PAS	
The evil Romulans' thick-padded quilted vests from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*	Trowa's so-funny-it's-sad clown outfit from *Gundam Wing*
HOT STUFF	
The carnaceous Borg-ette Seven-of-Nine in *Star Trek: Voyager*	That adorable pink-haired pop idol Lacus Clyne from *Gundam Seed*
BADDEST BAD-ASS	
Kirk's street-tough arch-nemesis Khan from *Star Trek II*	Amuro Ray's slightly effeminate but still badass foil Char Aznable from *Mobile Suit Gundam*
SIDEKICK WE WANNA KICK	
Grating ship's doctor/cook Neelix on *Star Trek: Voyager*	Hare, little mechanized pain in the rear from *Gundam Seed*
MOST DEPRESSING DEATH	
Lovable Vulcan Spock took one for the team in *Star Trek II*	The death of sweetheart Lalah Sun brought down Ray and Char in *Mobile Suit Gundam*
GOOFIEST MOMENT	
Basically all of *Star Trek V*	Basically all of *G Gundam*

THE VERDICT

They've both got their share of ups and downs, but with nine TV series and 10 theatrically released movies (compared to Star Trek's five TV series and nine films), the Gundam franchise just blows Trek clear out of the sky. Take that, Shatner!

for the detailed storylines, I had a team of writers and so forth who created the specific episodes.

The story of *Seed* closely parallels the original Gundam storyline. Why did you choose to do this?

The first *Gundam* series came out basically right after the Vietnam War, and it was based on that war. But there have been recent wars, such as the Afghan War and the Gulf War. I wanted to look at things from the perspective of modern wars. War has evolved, and that's why Gundam has evolved, too.

***Gundam Seed* is pretty violent—and more realistically violent than action-focused Gundam series like *Wing*. Was that part of modernizing the franchise?**

[pauses] When I worked with the producer, we basically wanted to portray war as painful; we wanted to show what war was truly like, and send this message to today's kids. The producer suggested making the show like this opening scene of *Saving Private Ryan*, which realistically portrays the pain and the true cost of war.

We wanted to send a message to the kids that war is undesirable, and show them all the reasons we have to avoid war. That was my basic point.

No one could possibly mistake that message by the end of the series!

Oh, the last episodes had all kinds of plots and storylines that were scrapped. Originally, it was much more violent than it ended up.

Really?

Oh, yeah. The initial storylines were much, much worse. But I can't tell you anything about that.

Nuts. Did you feel confident when you finally completed the show?

When I finished, I felt very relieved because the pressure was off me. It was very tiring, but it was a blessing to have this kind of project.

A lot of American press call the Gundam franchise the "Star Trek of Japan." Do think that's accurate?

Really? [surprised] I wish that Gundam is as good as Star Trek! That would be great.

No way! Why do you think *Star Trek* is better?

I think that Star Trek's story and setting is *really* well made, so that both adults and kids can enjoy them. And I really respect how the stories are made in the US. For example, shows like *ER* and *The X-Files*—those stories are so intriguing. I hope that Japan can catch up to the level of the U.S. in means of story writing.

***Seed* has just begun airing in America. Do you think it'll have the same success here as in Japan?**

I'm not that familiar with U.S. culture and how the American people might perceive things, so I can't really say how it's going to be received. I'm just relieved I know how the Japanese fans reacted to the series!

Managing editor Robert Bricken would like to thank Jerry Chu of Bandai Entertainment and Noake Akiba of Sunrise for helping coordinate this interview.

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PITY THE SCHOOL

ANIME INSIDER tours the 10 wildest anime high schools you'd rather attend

By Bamboo Dong

You just got back to school and you're sick and tired of it already? We don't blame you. What you *should* have done is transferred to an anime school! Sure, you may find yourself staring down the barrel of an intergalactic cannon, chased by invading aliens, tussling with the school ape or sliced in half by a bodacious supermodel samurai, but anything's better than sitting through Algebra class one more time. So go on and educate yourself with our 10 best anime school picks and decide which one is right for you!

CLAMP STUDENTS

10. CLAMP SCHOOL

(CLAMP School Detectives, Bandai)

PROS: It's the only campus on Earth big enough to be seen from space! Overflowing with every angst-ridden, super-powered character from every CLAMP manga ever, CLAMP school is the ultimate in refined education.

CONS: CLAMP School brings new meaning to the phrase "private academy;" you'd better be hyper-intelligent, uncommonly beautiful and/or wield amazing psychokinetic powers if you want in.

SCHOOL MOTTO: "Remember where you parked."

9. GRAVITON GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

(Project A-Ko, CPM)

PROS: Take your pick of having a ringside seat to some of the greatest girl vs. giant robot battles of the century, or watching the beautiful rich girl traipse about in a super-powered bikini. Classes include mecha piloting and jet pack use!

A-KO VS. B-KO

CONS: The reasons for the school's updates include frequent alien invasions, plus the ceaseless fighting between mecha-builder rich girl B-ko and the super-powered A-ko, which often destroys the school and countless students.

SCHOOL MOTTO: "Home of the 1990 Japan Champion Missile-ducking Team."

8. FURINKAN HIGH SCHOOL

(Ranma 1/2, Viz)

PRINCIPAL KUNO (TOP) AND STUDENTS

PROS: A proud supporter of gender equality, Furinkan is home to a bevy of exciting extracurricular activities like martial arts cooking, martial arts gymnastics, and even some after school clubs... where you can learn martial arts!

CONS: Principal Kuno will have you fleeing in terror from his penchant for impromptu student haircuts. Add in the fact that the student body is comprised of a pack of lunatics obsessed with martial arts, and what you've got is more an asylum than a school.

SCHOOL MOTTO: *"Educating the mind means educating the hair."*

7. AZUMANGA HIGH

(Azumanga Daioh, ADV)

CLASS CLEAN-UP

PROS: This high school is renowned for its high rate of graduating students, even the most imbecilic! The teachers have a broad range of life experiences to help share with the classes, and the students discuss everything from hiccup cures to...uh...hemorrhoids.

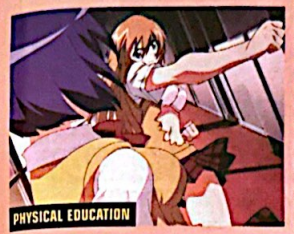
CONS: The material teachers share with the class include alcoholism and perversion. If you can make it past the teachers, though, your smarts will surely be drained away by students like the ADD-poster child Tomo.

SCHOOL MOTTO: "We *look* normal, and that's what's most important."

6. NANYO ACADEMY

(Ikki Tousen, Geneon)

PROS: An exclusive private school, Nanyo is home to a pack of talented martial artists who spend way more time kicking the snot out of each other than learning English. They all compete in a massively entertaining battle royale that's way more interesting than cleaning the blackboard!


PHYSICAL EDUCATION

CONS: Unless you're one heck of a fighter, Nanyo Academy probably isn't for you. If you're a boy, the girls are cute—and psychos. And if you're a girl, you should wear plenty—and we mean plenty—of clothes.

SCHOOL MOTTO: "Enhance yourself. Desecrate others."

5. CROMARTIE HIGH

(Cromartie High, ADV)

STAR PUPIL MECHAZAWA

PROS: With a school body made up entirely of delinquents, Cromartie High is...well, there's nothing good to say about Cromartie. Unless you like robots, gorillas or Freddie Mercury, as all are students at Cromartie High. Bad students.

CONS: If you're looking to actually learn anything other than tough-guy hairstyling or how to eat the most pencils in a single sitting, Cromartie might not be your best choice. Plus, some people are allergic to gorillas.

SCHOOL MOTTO: "A school good enough for Freddie Mercury, or his look-alike."

4. HOLY FOREST ACADEMY

(Great Teacher Onizuka, TOKYOPOP)

ONIZUKA'S SPECIAL ED.

PROS: This famous high school is best known for its commitment to furthering its students' education, most notably by hiring a former bike gang leader, Eikichi Onizuka! His "unique" teaching methods are slowly winning over Japan!

CONS: Home to the most vicious students on the planet—no teacher or student is safe from their schemes. And while Onizuka occasionally dresses like an elephant, he's still less perverted than some of the teachers.

SCHOOL MOTTO: "Putting ignorance in a German Suplex."

3. JINDAI HIGH SCHOOL

(Full Metal Panic, ADV)

PROS: Anyone thinking about a career in the military needs look no further than Jindai High School! Many of the students would be happy to help acclimatize them, like officer-turned-student Sagara Sosuke.

SOSUKE'S SCHOOL SAFETY

CONS: Seasoned combat veterans only need apply. If you aren't ducking the overly paranoid Sagara's heavy firepower, you'll be running in terror from the wrath of hot-tempered student Chidori, who takes no prisoners.

SCHOOL MOTTO: "Like boot camp for your brain."

2. TOMOBIKI HIGH SCHOOL

(Urusei Yatsura, AnimEigo)

PROS: No high school in Japan gives today's students a better lesson in astronomy and Japanese folklore than Tomobiki High School. Aliens and mythological creatures visit to help teach kids about the importance of diversity.

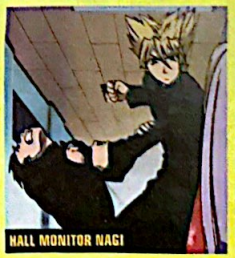
CLASS PRESIDENT ATARU

CONS: Those aliens and creatures are usually trying to find/eat/love/kill student Ataru Moroboshi, a terrible lecher and bane of the school. No teaching is actually accomplished, given the constant alien onslaughts.

SCHOOL MOTTO: "Without an alien invasion since last Thursday."

1. TOUDOU HIGH SCHOOL

(Tenjo Tenge, Geneon)


HALL MONITOR NAGI

PROS: The ultimate school of hard knocks. Toudou is the best martial arts school in Japan; even if you're just standing by the sidelines, you'll get to see samurai supermodels the Natsume sisters in action!

CONS: Death. Enrolling in Toudou could mean your death if you aren't strong enough to hold your own—or stay clear of the school's vicious and sadistic Enforcement Squad.

SCHOOL MOTTO: "Punch first, ask questions later."

Freelance writer Bamboo Dong is too cool for school, but not quite cool enough for the prom.

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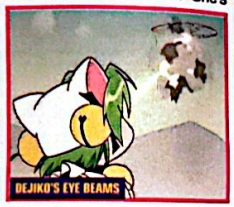
YOU DON'T KNOW 'Di Gi'

BUT YOU CAN WITH OUR HANDY, DANDY, TASTES-LIKE-CANDY 'DI GI CHARAT' GUIDE!

By Robert Bricken

SUGAR SUGAR Don't stare too long—Dejiko (top) and her pal Puchiko's sweetness can cause cavities.

Who's the girl that makes people happy with her cuteness? And who's the girl who then shoots those people with her eyebeams? It's Dejiko, a.k.a Di Gi Charat, star of the multitude of *Di Gi Charat* anime and manga, p.s. the mascot of Japan's supreme anime retail chain Gamers. She's also an alien princess who works as a clerk at Gamers to pay the rent until she makes it as an idol.



DEJIKO'S EYE BEAMS

Sound wacky? You have no idea—if pure insanity were a solid substance, and hammered out onto a DVD, it would contain the original *Di Gi Charat* series, due on DVD from Synch-Point in October. To get you prepped, we asked creator Koge-Donbo and series producer Y. Nakano to be your guides to the madness!

SHE'S HISTORY'S MOST POPULAR CAT...MAID...THING.

"When Broccoli/Gamers decided to start [Gamers' free, in-store magazine] *From Gamers* I was casually asked to do some illustrations for it," explains Koge-Donbo. "Dejiko was something I drew randomly, but for some reason they liked it, and decided that they wanted to make her into a mascot. I didn't have any inspirations for the characters other than when I was drawing, a lot of people around me were saying 'Cat ears!' and 'Maid outfits!'"

SHE'S THE PERSONIFICATION OF ADORABLE EVIL.

Behind those huge eyes and cutesy maid costumes lies a selfish, self-absorbed nasty streak a mile long. She's been known to blast Gamers' customers for merely browsing. "Originally, Dejiko's personality wasn't so mean," tells Donbo. "She was, in my mind, a cute but klutzy girl. But then I guess her real personality started showing," she laughs. Producer Y. Nakano knows: "It was mostly Koge-Donbo's idea," she laughs, adding, "I wouldn't say she's mean. Well, maybe evil."

THE DIRECTOR HAS A HISTORY OF INSANITY.

In his anime, that is. Before *Di Gi Charat*, Hiroaki Sakurai was breaking brain cells with the quite-manic-itself *Kodocha*. "When we first approached Director Sakurai about directing a series about *Di Gi Charat*, he was a little hesitant when he saw the illustrations," remembers Nakano. "But then he discovered that Dejiko isn't a typical anime catgirl, and gladly accepted. We gave him free reign on the TV show, and I guess it's part of Director Sakurai's personality to be surreal and crazy." Seems to be: after *Di Gi Charat*, Sakurai directed the *Cromartie High* anime, about a surreal Japanese high school attended by delinquents, a robot and a faux Queen lead singer Freddie Mercury.

THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS CHARCOAL.

As the premier anime/video game merchandise store chain in Japan, Gamers prides itself on customer satisfaction—ditching duties to fight to the death with your idol rival (in Dejiko's case, the lovely Rabi~en~Rose) does not cut it. "And I don't think the staff are allowed to threaten their customers," adds Nakano thoughtfully. Happily, in the anime Dejiko's cuteness is so overpowering that it keeps folks coming back!

MANAGER

THAT BLOB-LOOKIN' STORE MANAGER? HE'S A FINGER.

Actually, all those non-important characters featured in the first Di Gi Charat series that look like armless, legless blobs with faces are supposed to be fingers, according to creator Koge-Donbo. "I don't know why," she shrugs. "It was probably just a random idea."

DEJIKO IS FILTHY, FILTHY RICH.

Since the anime hit in 1999, Dejiko has become the idol of millions, thanks in no small part to the mountains of *Di Gi Charat* merchandise. Being the mascot of an anime merchandise store chain has its benefits; now you can find Koge-Donbo's hyper-cute *Charat* art in artbooks, video games, wall scrolls, school supplies, coasters, figures, postcards, statues, plush toys and Dejiko hats...to name a few.

ABARENBOU

D·G Charat © 2004 BROCCOLI. Art © Koge-Donbo

With that kind of success, U.S. anime licensors have scrambled to get a piece of the Di Gi Charat cake. Besides the original series from Synch-Point, ADV Films is already releasing the "prequel" anime series *Panyo Panyo Di Gi Charat*, and Bandai will bring out the re-imagining of the Charat saga, *Di Gi Charat Nyo*.

DON'T TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE ABARENBOU.

He's just too weird. This mysterious naked blue man with the pointy-shaped head—whose name is Japanese for "the violent guy"—shows up at Gamers threatening to commit all kinds of hooliganism, but usually ends up making really generic, after-school-special-type sayings about the importance of honesty, or just farting. Dejiko is alternately terrified of or annoyed with him.

BUTTONS BEWARE! Clockwise from top: Rabi~En~Rose, Puchiko and Dejiko push the cuteness button.

It's Koge-Donbo's favorite episode. "It makes no sense, and the subtle jokes are very good." We asked Nakano to try and explain the blue meanie, but got nowhere. "Hmm...I think explaining it ruins it for the viewers," excuses Nakano. "Besides, I don't think I can fully comprehend him myself!"

IT'S EVEN FUNNIER THAN YOU KNOW.

As hilarious as the original *Di Gi Charat* series is, it would be even more hilarious if you were one of the staff. "The things Abarenbou says is probably 80% of the time Director Sakurai's private jokes," promises Nakano. Most of the non-cute characters were added for the anime, and they're making fun of very certain people, she says. "We do know who Paya Paya is supposed to parody, but I don't think we're allowed to mention it," says Nakano. "Sorry!"

Managing Editor Robert Bricken says, "Don't make your Dejiko costume with a real cat. From one who knows!"

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MUCHO 'MUYO'

WHICH WISHY-WASHY 'TENCHI' STAR REIGNS SUPREME?

Tenchi Masaki and Seina Yamada have a lot more in common than their haircut. The stars of 1992's *Tenchi Muyo!* OVA and its 2002 spin-off *Tenchi Muyo! GXP* (respectively) have proven through their success that there really is a need for Tenchi's innovative blend of sci-fi adventure, crazy humor and the eternal dilemma of being a nice guy surrounded by hot, pushy girls.

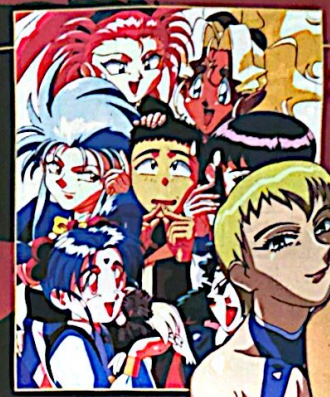
But can the galaxy handle two men so milquetoast? How do Tenchi Masaki, the lovable loser from the first beloved *Tenchi* series, or Seina Yamada, the incredibly unlucky Galaxy Police cadet from *GXP*, really compare? *A.I.* decided to figure out which *Tenchi* lead we actually need.

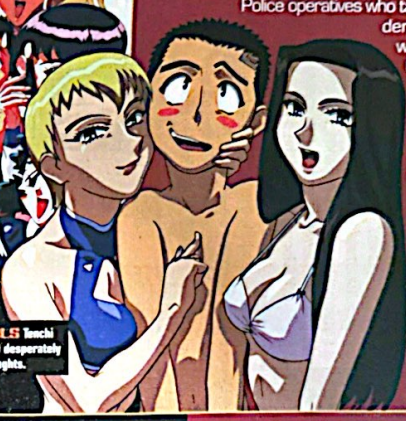
THE MAN

SEINA: Seina Yamada is unlucky. *Really* unlucky. In the first episode of *Tenchi Muyo! GXP* alone, Seina's bicycle falls apart while he's riding it; his friend's cellphone drops its signal simply by being close to Seina; a semi truck overheats as Seina rides past; and a colossal spaceship nearly lands on his head! And it's all downhill from there.

TENCHI: He's a dedicated student who lives in a beautiful countryside house with his wise old grandfather, his semi-perverted dad—and a boatload of hot alien girls who all desperately want to marry him. Sure, Tenchi has trouble choosing which girl he wants, but at least he can put his foot down when things get out of hand—sometimes.

EDGE: Tenchi. He may be indecisive, but at least he can hold his own against the freaks taking over his house.





GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS Tenchi (above) and Seina (right) desperately try and think unsexy thoughts.

HIS GIRLS

SEINA: Seina is unlucky in everything *but* love, as is evidenced by his tumultuous relationships with the buxom and bombastic Kirika and Amane, two Galaxy Police operatives who take a serious interest in him. Kirika is Seina's demure long-time confidant; Amane is the woman responsible for bringing him to the Galaxy Police. Plenty of sexy mishaps follow!

TENCHI: Romance landed on Tenchi's head when he accidentally released space pirate Ryoko from imprisonment at the shrine near his house; her release subsequently attracted five other girls, *all* of whom take an interest in Tenchi at one point or another in addition to the fiery Ryoko. Continuously beat to a pulp by Ryoko's jealous feuding with space princess Aeka (who sees a suitor behind Tenchi's gaze), Tenchi takes more than a few for the team in his wishy-washy pursuit of love.

EDGE: Seina. Kirika and Amane's rivalry doesn't put him in the hospital...at least, not in every episode.

SWORD PLAY Tenchi's (right) energy sword skills outshine Seina's skill at being a doofus.

HIS SKILL

SEINA: Seina's misfortune turns out to be a curse *and* a blessing. He might not have any specific combat skills, but his "bad luck" frequently leads to Seina choosing just the right path to intercept dangerous space pirates in the vastness of the galaxy, drawing them out of their many hiding places.

TENCHI: Tenchi's appearance is deceiving; he isn't even entirely human! A descendent of the royal alien family of Jurai, Tenchi has the skill to use the *tenchiken*, an energy sword that can control all Juraian ships. He can also generate Light Hawk Wings, an incredibly powerful force that previously only Juraian battleships could generate.

EDGE: Tenchi. He's not technically a Jedi, but his energy sword has it all over Anakin Skywalker.

HIS JOB

SEINA: As a fresh-faced Galaxy Police cadet, Seina is assigned to the Pirate Decoy Squad. You see, Seina's terrible luck caught the attention of the Galaxy Police's head honchos, who are now counting on Seina's miserable misfortune to attract the galaxy's toughest crop of pirates to bait! Regardless of the imminent danger, Seina still [illegible] thrilling intergalactic adventures.

TENCHI: Tenchi is a full-time high school student, which would be just fine if he didn't have a house full of meddling, supremely powerful alien women lusting after him. If it wasn't enough that space pirate Ryoko blew Tenchi's school to smithereens, the girls at home frequently interrupt his studies with their explosive antics.

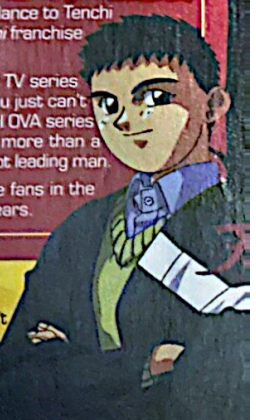
EDGE: Seina. Zooming around in space is way better than going to school, no matter how unlucky you are.

HIS LEGACY

SEINA: The new kid on the block, Seina is the first male lead in a *Tenchi* series who isn't Tenchi Masaki. His GXP DVD (released by FUNimation) sales are burning up the charts, and he's gaining popularity with *Tenchi* newbies and longtime fans. He shares more than a passing resemblance to Tenchi himself, and he seems destined to take over the *Tenchi* franchise crown once the original finally chooses a bride.

TENCHI: The star of two OVA series, two full-length TV series and three beloved theatrical films (all from Geneon), you just can't keep Tenchi Masaki down. His third and reportedly final OVA series is due out next year from FUNimation...which means more than a decade after he burst on to the scene, Tenchi is still a hot leading man.

EDGE: Tenchi. His anime won over a legion of anime fans in the '90s, and he's still winning fans even after all these years.



THE WINNER

The original Tenchi just outscores Seina. However, don't feel bad for Mr. Yamada—his show is still plenty hot, and he's still surrounded by a bevy of beautiful girls. And if that's not winning, then what is?

Associate editor Zac Bertschy once thought two girls were fighting over him, but they were just fighting near him.

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The 'Anime Insider' Preview of

PEACE MAKER 鉄 KUROGANE

Honor, sacrifice and gallons of blood fill Kurono Nanae's ultimate samurai showdown

There's a fine line between sanity and insanity, and Tetsunosuke Ichimura may have already crossed it.

Following the murder of his beloved parents, young Tetsunosuke enlists in the Shinsengumi, a law enforcement squad hired by the government during the explosive revolution spurned by Japan's feudal era. Fueled by an insatiable zeal for revenge, Tetsunosuke seeks one thing: finding his parents' killer. He succeeds, barely retaining his humanity during the bloodshed, which is further tested by his violent work for the Shinengumi and Japan's turbulent Meiji era.

"While *Peacemaker Kurogane* is based on an actual period in Japanese history—the tumultuous period of the Meiji restoration—the story embellishes actual events for the sake of drama," explains ADV Manga head of publishing Susan Itin. "But almost all the characters in the manga are based on actual historical figures."

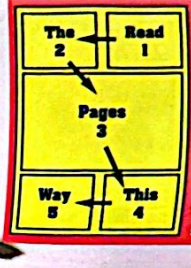
Peacemaker Kurogane's mix of violence, pathos and surprising sense of humor has thrilled Japanese readers since manga-ka Kurono Nanae debuted it in the *Comic Blade* manga anthology in 1999 (the first saga, just titled *Peacemaker*, chronicled Tetsunosuke's quest for vengeance). This second saga, due this October from ADV Manga, follows the slightly more adult Tetsunosuke and the Shinsengumi as they try to keep the increasingly fragile peace of the Meiji Restoration. "We think this will be a great-selling title for ADV Manga," adds Itin. "Hard-hitting action, suspense and betrayal always works for us." Apparently so, since ADV Films is releasing the *Kurogane* anime series this October as well.

For now, you'll just have to tide yourself over with these 10 pages of the original manga. So strap on your sword, rally your friends and get ready for Kurono Nanae's *Peacemaker Kurogane*!

■ Zac Bertschy

MEET THE PEACENIK Tetsunosuke might be a whiz with a sword, but he has trouble with his sandal straps

IN THESE PAGES...



Shinsengumi vice-captain Hijikata is visiting with Shogunate officials who have heard many rumors about both Hijikata's battle prowess and Tetsunosuke's lack of skill. What the officials haven't heard is that Hijikata is messing with them—Hijikata's underling Yamazaki is masquerading as our hero, while the real Tetsunosuke has been hog-tied by pretty boy swordsman Okita...and his pig Saizo.

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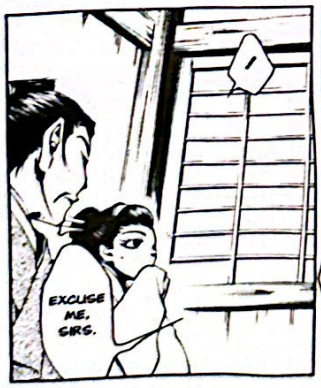

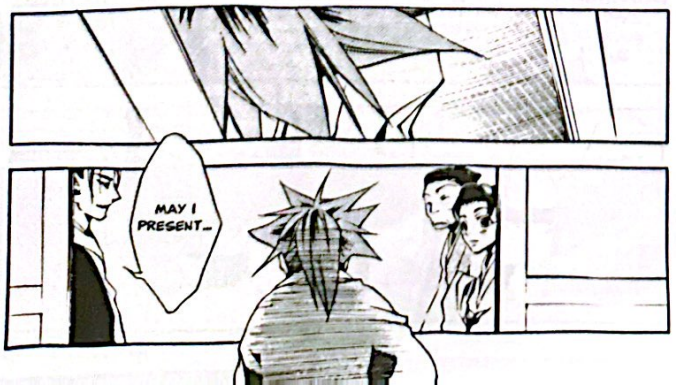

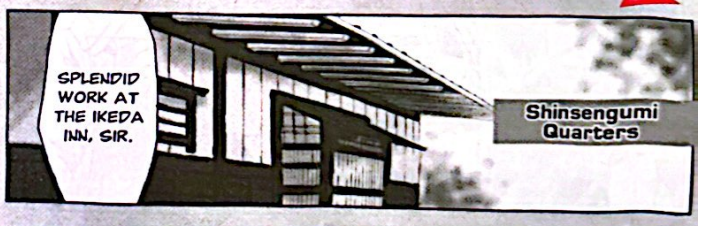

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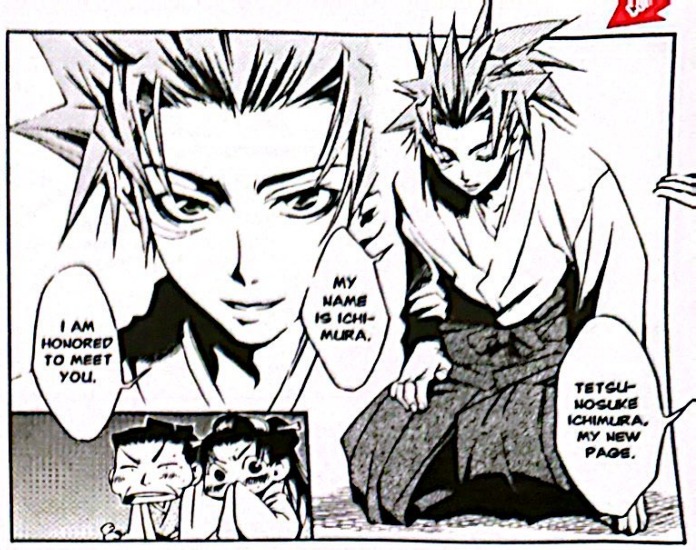

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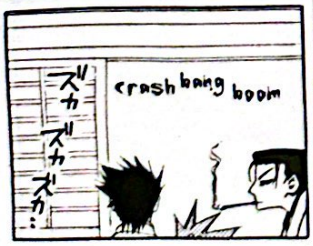

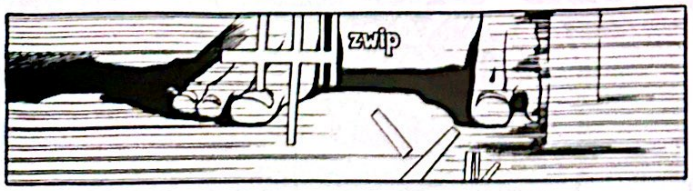

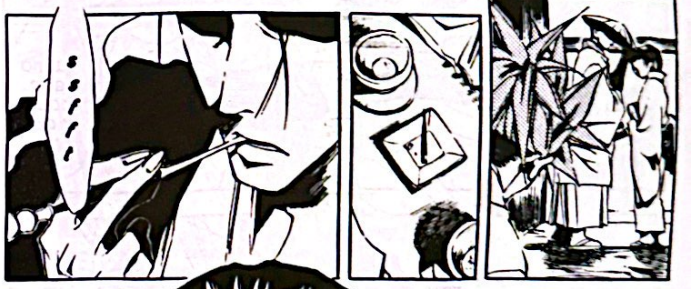

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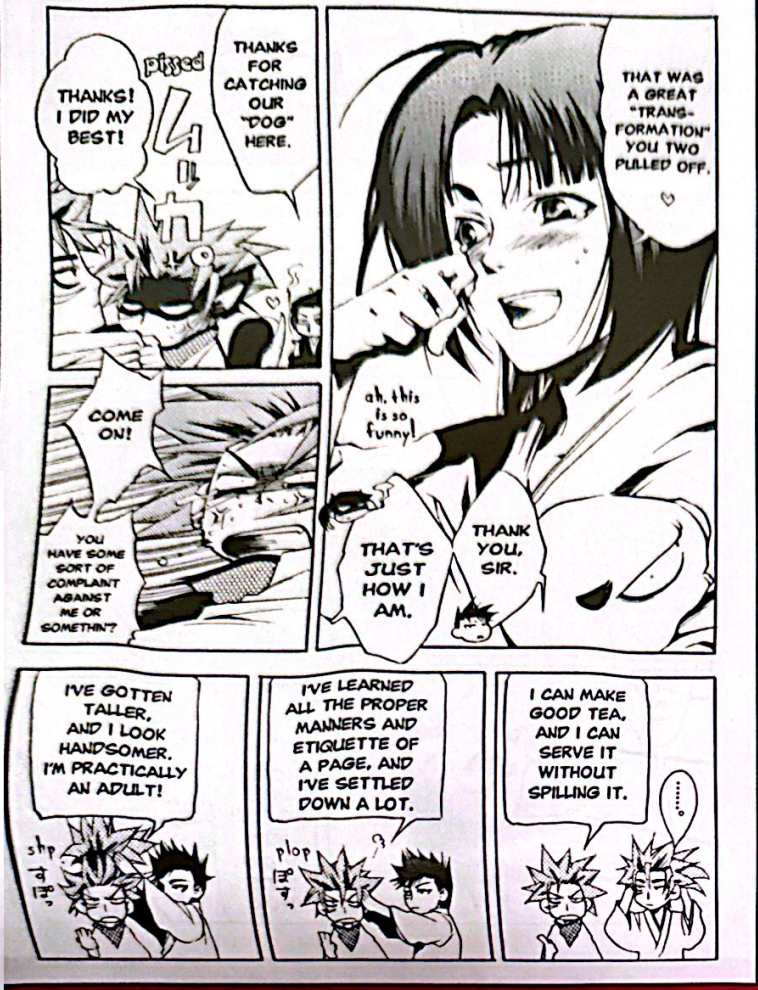

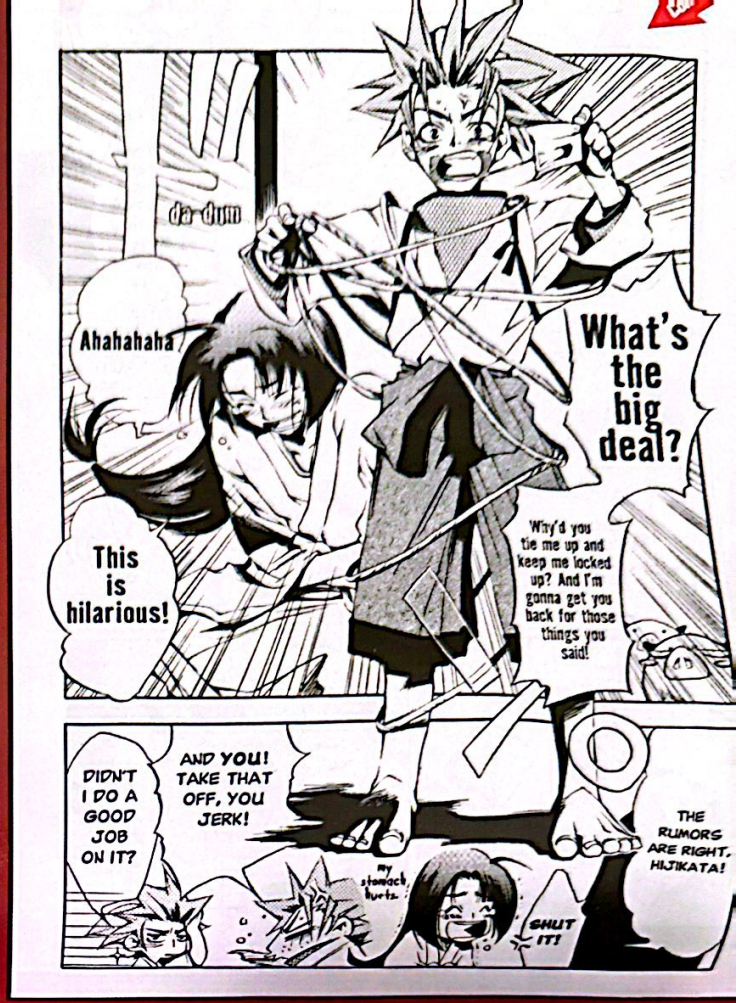

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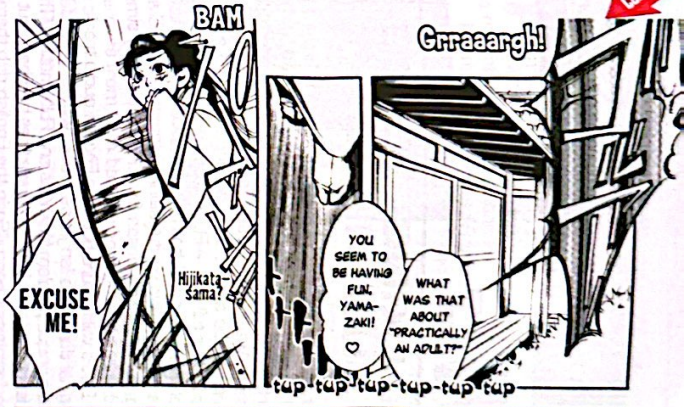
Squealing for more? Check out *Peacemaker Kurogane*



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FIT FOR A KING

'YU-GI-OH!' AND 'SHAMAN KING' TO BE RELEASED UNCUT AND SUBTITLED!

For years, fans of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Shaman King* haven't gotten the full story—both these shows, licensed by 4Kids Entertainment, have only been available in English, edited for its American broadcast. After countless fan requests, they'll be able to see the Shaman King and King of Games in their full glory—FUNimation will release the original Japanese version of both shows this fall.

"Why are these two series being released uncut?" asks Elliot Chang, a PR spokesperson for 4Kids. "It's very simple: fan demand. Because the fans wanted it."

The DVDs will feature both the English audio track, and the original Japanese language track, with subtitles. This posed a unique problem for 4Kids and FUNimation. "There are [lengthy scenes] of the shows that had been cut out entirely," explains Cheng. "So in the English dub there will be scenes where the characters don't speak at all." Since thee English scripts were often written to accommodate the edited versions of the shows, the Japanese subtitle scripts are being totally re-written to be completely accurate to the original. The original Japanese music will also be included.

Those of you accustomed to the sanitized U.S. versions of these two shows might be surprised by what was omitted from the original Japanese animation. In *Shaman King*, for example, every image of a crucifix had been digitally removed, for religious sensitivity. Additionally, bullet wounds, eye wounds...pretty much wounds in general, accumulated through the many Shaman fights of the series, were also censored. *Yu-Gi-Oh!* was released in America, without any images of guns or references, as well as a completely changed soundtrack. In both series, many character names were anglicized to make them more acceptable to American audiences.

The first DVD volumes of both the original Japanese versions of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Shaman King* will be available this October. ■ Brian Hanson

TOO HOT FOR TV? Everybody's looking forward to uncut *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Shaman King*, especially these two.

FAST FORWARD

QUICK PEEKS AT THE NEXT BIG VIDEOS

IRON "MADE IN" To combat the ever-increasing threat of anime DVD piracy, 28 Japanese entertainment companies have begun using a special "Made In Japan" trademark stamp intended to make spotting bootleg DVDs easier. The trademark will also assist Japanese entertainment companies to better prosecute bootlegging outfits.

GHIBLI BUMP Buena Vista Home Video has announced that their three Studio Ghibli titles originally scheduled to be released on August 6, namely *Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind*, *Porco Rosso* and *My Neighbor Totoro*, have been pushed to an unspecified release date sometime in 2005. No reason was given for the delay.

NOUVEAU OVA *Sakura Wars* franchise operators Sega and Pony Canyon have announced that a fourth OVA series, titled *Le Nouveau Paris*, is due in Japan on DVD this October. No story details were available at press time, although the storyline won't include fan favorite character Sumire, who made her final appearance in the *Sumire* OVA. ■ Zac Bertschy

'INUYASHA' INUNDATION

RUMIKO TAKAHASHI'S DEMON DOMINATES DVDS THIS FALL

Forget about the dog days of summer—this autumn is when dog-demon Inuyasha storms store shelves with a mountain of DVD releases.

Rumiko Takahashi's (*Ranma 1/2*) colossal fantasy franchise about Kagome, a modern schoolgirl, and sullen half-demon Inuyasha's quest to reclaim shards of the sacred jewel has been the highest-rated anime show on Cartoon Network's Adult Swim block, and can prove it with a ton of fall DVD releases.

Besides new volumes 21 and 22 of the regularly released TV series in October, September 7 sees the release of *Inuyasha the Movie: Affections Touching Across Time*. In the movie, the son of a villain who was defeated by Inuyasha's father arrives from China looking for revenge. On the same day, the full *Inuyasha* Season One DVD box set will be available, containing the first 27 episodes of the TV series on five DVDs and a replica of Inuyasha's necklace.

"So many people have embraced *Inuyasha* with such dedication, it continues to remain one of the most popular and best selling manga and anime properties in North America." said Anthony Jiwa, director of Marketing for VIZ, LLC.

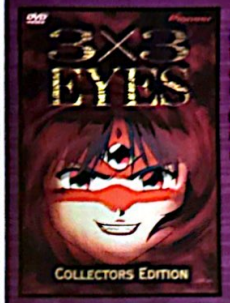
Besides DVDs, *Inuyasha* still rules the fall: the *Affections* movie will get a limited theatrical release in September; the second series of action figures from Toynami, Sesshomaru and Kikyo, become available in September; two volumes of Viz' Ani-manga will be released; and Bandai will publish *Inuyasha: The Secret of the Cursed Mask* videogame for PS2 in November.

Despite the multitude of merchandise, fans can be grateful finding all of Inuyasha's goods should be easier than finding the shards of the Sacred Jewel. ■ Glenn Schmall

Inuyasha © Rumiko Takahashi/Shogakukan • Sunrise • Yomiuri TV 2000, 2004. Perfect Duet © NIC / Pioneer. Neon Genesis Evangelion © Gainax/Project EVA. TV Sailor Kiddy Grade © Gonzo. • Gonzo/Gaga. 3x3 Eyes © Yuki Takada / Kodansha/Pioneer. Sakura Wars © Sega/Osamu Tezuka/Sakura Wars © Sega/Osamu Tezuka/Bandai Shaman King © Hiroyuki Takei/Shueisha Inc.

EASTERN EGGS

HIDDEN SECRETS OF YOUR FAVORITE DVDS

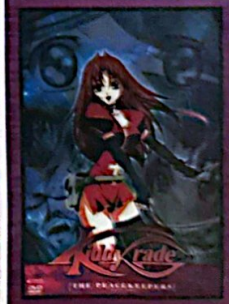


3X3 EYES

To find the hidden gallery on the second disk, select "Extras" then "Actors." On Megumi's name, press right to enjoy a collection of beautiful pictures that you wouldn't see otherwise.

DUAL! VOL. 3

Head to the "Extras" menu. To access a short called *Mitsuki meets Mitsuki!*, you have two options. Select "Character Data" and stop on Mitsuki's page. Highlight "Extras," click up, then enter. You can also access this by clicking on Mitsuki's forehead on the "Extras" menu.

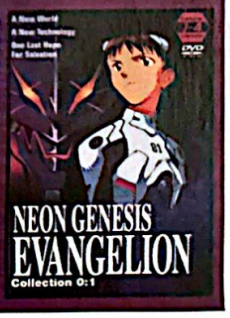


KITTY GRADE

This feature can be found on all of the *Kiddy Grade* DVDs, so try this on any volume to access this neat little egg. In the extras menu, shift the cursor down to highlight the "Main Menu" button. Press left and an invisible arrow will appear. Clicking on this arrow will get you a subtitled version of the original Japanese piracy warnings.

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION VOL.1 (REMASTERED)

For a cleaned up version of the opening and ending, head over to the extras menu and press up to highlight the text "Extras Panel." Once it's highlighted, press enter and enjoy. If this doesn't work, take the easier route and skip ahead to chapter seven on the DVD for the same footage. ■ Rebecca Bundy



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"Absolutely stunning…boasting dazzlingly evocative sequences. Oshii's vision is certainly impressive enough for this viewer to want to go back for more."

MIDNIGHT EYE - JASPER SHARP

"From the first scene, it's evident that this is another glorious product of director Mamoru Oshii."

AIN'T IT COOL NEWS – MORIARTY

When machines learn to feel, who decides what is human...

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EXCLUSIVELY IN THEATRES SEPTEMBER 17

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HOT OVAS

TOKYO'S STRAIGHT-TO-DVD GOODNESS

GUNBUSTER 2

GUNBUSTER 2

The hotly anticipated sequel to *Evangelion* producer studio Gainax's smash-hit, fan-favorite 1988 OVA series is here! Nono is a waitress in a science-fiction world where the only way to fight the menacing Space Monster invasion is by using "hopless" powers and piloting the amazing Buster Machine mobile suits. Nono dreams of becoming a Buster Machine pilot, and befriends a hard-eyed space jockey who tells her there's no way she'll do it without any hopless power; fortunately for Nono, she's got the guts and determination to do it anyway!

HOIHOI-SAN

SINGLE-SWEEP EXTERMINATOR HOIHOI-SAN

It's 20XX, and Japan's vermin problem is at an all-time high! Who will save us? Why, a miniature extermination robot named Hoihoi-san, of course! Developed by a Japanese company called Mars Pharmacy, Hoihoi-san makes her debut at a little under one foot tall. She may not look menacing, but she'll strike fear into the hearts of vermin everywhere!

WIND -A BREATH OF HEART-

This straight-to-video prequel accompanies the TV series of the same name, based on the popular dating simulation game. In the series, Makoto and Minako Okano return to their hometown to investigate the disappearance of their mother. Just as Makoto starts to settle into his new life, he hears the strains of a harmonica that lead him to a beautiful young girl—who turns out to be his long-lost childhood sweetheart, Minami! ■ ZB

WIND

KIDDY GRADE VOL. 6
Éclair and Lumiere successfully overthrow the GOTT headquarters, changing many of the rules around and creating an army of look-alike clones. Only a pair of masked motorcyclists can stop them! (FUNimation, $24.98)

KNIGHT HUNTERS VOL. 2
Weiss discovers that the organization Esset is behind the Kowa Academy murders. Omi predicts a troublesome future for Yoji, but that doesn't stop him and the others from doing their job. (Media Blasters, $29.95)

MIAMI GUNS VOL. 3
Yao and Lu have their hands full with a masked serial killer on an island resort, assassins at the Miss Miami Contest, and a crooked casino that'll test Yao's luck and pocketbook. (AN Entertainment, $24.95)

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION PLATINUM VOL. 2
Personal differences between Shinji and Asuka must be put aside when one of the EVAs loses control and threatens to destroy the entire city. (ADV, $29.98)

NED TOKYO
A collection of three short stories about a young girl's overactive imagination, a super-fast and deadly car race, and the dangers that arise when people rely too much on technology. (ADV, $19.98)

REQUIEM FROM THE DARKNESS VOL. 1
When a person tells one hundred ghost stories, they'll have a supernatural experience. Momosuke Yamaoka, however, has his first of many supernatural experiences long before his hundred stories are told! (Geneon, $24.98, w/box $34.98)

R.O.D. THE TV VOL. 2
Nenene finally overcomes writers' block and Anita makes many friends at school. When they're not living normal lives, the Paper Sisters continue to hunt down rare books for Dokusensha. (Geneon, $29.98)

SAIKANO VOL. 3
Chise and Tetsu are finally reunited and given the chance to start their relationship again. Yukari, still grieving from the death of her boyfriend, takes her rage out on a downed pilot. (Viz, $29.98)

STELLVIA VOL. 1
In 2167, a terrible disaster befell the Earth. Over 150 years later, the same disaster threatens to strike again. It's up to Shima Katase and the Stellvia crew to protect the Earth once more. (Geneon, $24.98)

AGE OF AQUARIUS The cast of ADV's *Aquarian Age* take the stage.

YU-GI-OH! SEASON 2 VOL. 8
Yugi and Pegasus face off in a duel, but Pegasus's Millennium Eye allows him to see the cards Yugi has drawn. Meanwhile, Bakura uses his Millennium Ring to help free Yugi's friends. (FUNimation, $14.98)

OCTOBER

.HACK//SIGN COMPLETE COLLECTION
The complete collected tale of "The World" RPG player Tsukasa, who finds himself mysteriously trapped in the game, imbued with special powers that will change the face of the game forever. (Bandai, $149.98)

AQUARIAN AGE VOL. 2
Kyouta, Shingo, and Junichi must learn to balance their music with their studies, but it isn't easy with fame and fortune in their future. Meanwhile, strange things continue to happen with Yoriko. (ADV, $29.98)

AZUMANGA DAIOH VOL. 5
Tomo loses trust in vending machines, Osaka holds lessons in yawning, and they all waste time talking about the existence of Santa Claus, hitting up karaoke bars, and watching the cherry blossoms fall. (ADV, $29.98)

DRAGON BALL Z: CELL GAMES—AWAKENING
After Android 16 sacrifices himself and Cell makes numerous copies of himself to kill the Z Warriors, Gohan unleashes his ultimate attack: the ability to power up to Super Saiyan 2! (FUNimation, $19.98)

DOKKOIDA?! VOL. 2
Dokkoida and Neruloid Girl continue to goof off with their neighbors, who also happen to be their arch-nemeses. Why let a little thing

Dunbuster Z © 2004 Gainax/Top 2 Companies. Wind © 2004 Minori/KSS. Ho-Ho San © Yuichiro Yamada/Nippon Ichi Soft. Age of Aquarius © Sunlight/Freelight Project.

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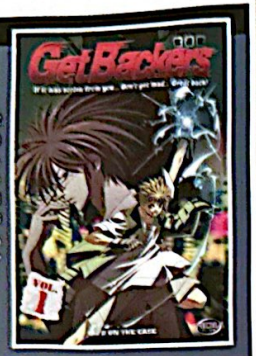
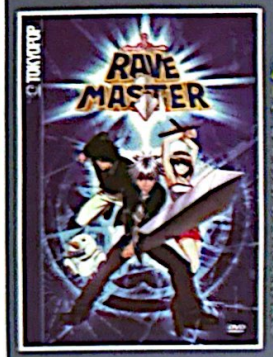
HOT PICKS

GETBACKERS VOL. 1

September 7 on DVD, ADV, $39.98

Everyone's lost something, whether it's their wallet or something one-of-a-kind and irreplaceable. It's the GetBackers' job to do just that: get back your lost items. With a 100% (almost) successful recovery rate, super-powered Ban Mido and Ginji Amano take a wide range of clients willing to pay anywhere from a few dollars to a few million to recover their lost items. Of course, whatever money they manage to get goes towards paying off overdue bills and IOUs! An artbox is included.





RAVE MASTER VOL. 1

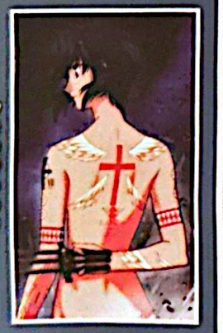
October 12 on DVD, TOKYOPOP, $14.99

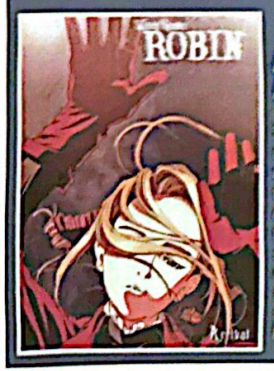
The Cartoon Network hit lands on DVD! The power of the Dark Stone threatens to smother the world with pure evil unless the heroic Haru Glory and his carrot-nosed dog Plue can sniff out the Rave Stone, the only force in the world strong enough to reckon with the Dark Stone! It's up to Haru, Plue and a cast of crazy characters to take on some of the most insane villains you'll ever meet in their quest for the power of the Rave Stone. With a theme song by Reel Big Fish and a list price of only $14.99, plenty of fans will be joining the Rave-olution come October!

TSUKIHIME VOL. 1

October 12 on DVD, Geneon, $39.98

Produced by J.C. Staff (*Ikki Tousen*, *R.O.D the TV*), *Tsukihime* follows Shiki, a student with an amazing ability to visualize and sever the "lifelines" of those he encounters; when his ability fails to kill a vampire, things get sticky. The troubled lad has to deal with the sudden death of his father and his mysterious past. Dark, detailed, and engaging, Tsukihime promises to be a series that any anime fan should have in their collection. An artbox is included.





WITCH HUNTER ROBIN: COMPLETE COLLECTION

October on DVD, Bandai, $149.98

When dangerous witches bent on using their supernatural powers for evil strike, who do you call? The STN-J, of course! Japan's premiere witch-hunting society, now armed with a new witchcraft-using hunter named Robin who wields the power of flame, the STN-J tracks down evil witches and brings them to justice. What they don't know is that their greatest enemy may be within their very ranks! This limited edition boxed set collects the smash-hit gothic action series from Cartoon Network. ■ RB & ZB

like trying to kill each other ruin a summer festival? (Geneon, $29.98)

EX-DRIVER THE MOVIE
Lorna, Lisa and Souichi rely on their gas guzzlin' autos to track down and rescue drivers when their car's AI goes berserk. Will they be able to survive a do-or-die race? (Geneon, $29.98)

FIGHTING SPIRIT VOL. 2
Ippo and Miyata face off in the ring; Ippo shows incredible determination while Miyata counters with skill. After the match, Ippo goes to train with Takamura to prepare for his professional debut! (Geneon, $29.98)

FLAME OF RECCA VOL. 1
Recca lives in the modern world but follows the way of the ninja. After meeting Yanagi, he promises to be her ninja and protect her, even in the face of enemies with mysterious powers. (Viz, $24.98)

GADGUARD VOL. 3
Two of Night Town's residents look into their past to find hope for their future. Hajiki's dark present as part of the underground, however, might spell the end of hope. (Geneon, $29.98)

GIANT ROBO VOL. 1
Dr. Shizuma and his colleagues created the Shizuma Drive, an energy source that replaces all others on Earth. Big Fire kidnaps him and it's up to Kusama Daisaku and the Giant Robo to rescue him. (Media Blasters, $24.95)

GOKUSEN VOL. 1
Yankumi teaches math at an elite private school. While her students do everything to make her quit her job, they don't realize that she's the heir to a powerful Yakuza group! (Media Blasters, $29.95)

GRAVITATION VOL. 4
Shuichi makes a startling discovery about Yuki suddenly collapsing; it's his fault! Is this the end for the unlikely pair, or will love and music heal Yuki's wounds? (Right Stuf, $29.95)

KIDDY GRADE VOL. 7
The real Éclair and Lumiere show off their new bodies and reveal the impostors running GOTT. (FUNimation, $24.98)

KNIGHTS OF THE ZODIAC VOL. 7
Seiya faces off against the Silver Saint, Misty, only to have two more join in the fray, while the Bronze Knights discover that they must protect Saori, the reincarnation of Athena. (ADV, $14.98)

LAST EXILE VOL. 6
Claus and Dio return to the Silvana, unaware that the ship has been taken over by the Guild. After a series of grueling trials and ceremonies,

Rave Master © Hiro Kodama/"Rave" Partnership. Witch Hunter Robin © Sunrise. Get Backers © Aki Yuki. Rando Ayamine • Kodansha

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TSUKIHIME 月姫

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Dio is officially declared Delphine's successor. (Geneon, $29.98)

LUPIN THE 3RD VOL. 8
Fujiko is hired to capture Lupin, but Lupin already has his hands full trying to recover stolen diamonds, a Yeti's tear drop, a mermaid's scale and a dragon's liver! (Geneon, $24.98, w/toy $34.98)

MEZZO VOL. 1
Mikura, Haruda, and Kuro of the Danger Service Agency will tackle any case you throw their way, no matter how dangerous it is, even if it requires that they get their hands dirty. (ADV, $29.98)

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM SEED VOL. 2 & 3
Kira and superstar pilot Mu La Flaga struggle to defend the Archangel from the forces of ZAFT. Faced with a difficult decision, Kira chooses justice over friendship. (Bandai, $29.98)

PARANOIA AGENT VOL.1
Character designer Tsukiko Sagi says she was attacked by a rollerblading boy with a bat. But nothing is truly as it seems in this TV series by Satoshi Kon. (Geneon, $29.98, w/box $39.98)

PARASITE DOLLS VOL. 1
In a futuristic Tokyo, humans and electronic "boomers" co-exist. Agent Basil and his boomer partner, Kimball, investigate cases that involve dangerous boomers, drugs and political backstabbing. (ADV, $29.98)

PEACEMAKER VOL. 1
Tetsunosuke Ichimura longs to join the Shinsengumi to become stronger and avenge the murder of his parents. The cost for power, however, is high. (ADV, $29.98)

R.O.D THE TV VOL. 3
Nenene's finished her novel, but her newfound wealth only brings the Paper Sisters more trouble. Terrorists kidnap Nenene, forcing them to pick between money and friendship. (Geneon, $29.98)

SHUTTLY Two heroic Knights of the Zodiac mug for the camera.

SISTER PRINCESS VOL. 1
Wataru, after failing the entrance exams, transfers to a school on Promise Island. There, he discovers he has twelve cute younger sisters. (ADV, $29.98, w/box $39.98)

TENCHI MUYO! GXP VOL. 6
A well-deserved vacation is delayed when the crew stops to check on a fake distress call. On Earth, Seina bumps into Tenchi and introduces Fuka to her creator, Wasshu. (FUNimation, $24.98)

TEXHNOLYZE VOL. 4
The Organo starts to collapse from within as the streets of Lukuss erupt in warfare. Allied gangs turn their guns on each other as key figures and hideouts are hit by an unknown assailant. (Geneon, $29.98)

THE SUPER MILK-CHAN SHOW VOL. 3
Milk-chan continues to play the superhero for her city while her bills pile up, the ants in her backyard enjoy their own episode, and the landlord tries to get her to pay rent. (ADV, $29.98)

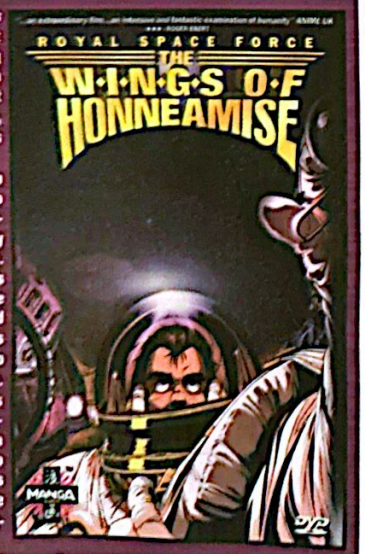
WOLF'S RAIN VOL. 3
The war between the nobles tears a rift across the Earth and threatens Kiba's quest for paradise. Will his pack keep it together, or fall victim to the nobles' villainous machinations? (Bandai, $29.98)

YU YU HAKUSHO VOL. 26
Sensui, Gourme, and the Gamemaster kidnap Kuwabara to learn his Dimension Sword technique. Hiei joins the team again to stop the bad guys from cutting the barrier between the living and spirit worlds. (FUNimation, VHS/DVD $19.98/24.98)

Wings Of Honneamise © Bandai Visual. Knights Of The Zodiac © Masami Kurumada/Kodokawa Shoten • TBS • Dentsu • TMS

RE'ANIME'TED

PAST HITS MAKE THE PRESENT PERFECT



Beautiful and otherworldly, *The Wings of Honneamise* was a classic when it first appeared in 1987, reaching American shores thanks to Manga Entertainment in 1995. Even now, it manages to hold up despite its age, thanks to the ambitious and gorgeous efforts of Studio Gainax.

In a world that's never been to space and, frankly, doesn't seem to want to go, no one takes underachiever Shirotsugh Lhadatt seriously as a member of the space program. When he signs up to be the world's first astronaut in the Royal Space Force, however, everyone's started taking notice, including assassins from other countries and people who think the space program's a total joke.

Only Riquinni Monderaiko believes in poor Shiro. A street-corner missionary, she preaches to an unheeding crowd and makes Shiro wonder—when man finally does reach space, what happens next? Are they truly ready for such a momentous leap?

Gripping, touching and thought-provoking, everyone should check out *The Wings of Honneamise*—and then watch it again, if just to understand it a little more.

■ Miguel A.L. Esquivel

GIRLS! GIRLS! GIRLS!
school girls...cute girls...tough girls...

Sister Princess
Wataru was at the top of his class; but after failing his only high school entrance exam, he finds himself sent to attend school in a mysterious place called Promised Island instead! There he meets his THIRTEEN sisters! What's a big brother to do?
Volume 1: Oh, Brother! Available 10/19/04
Look for Volumes 2-7 to be Available Soon!
$29.98 SRP

AZUMANGA DAIOH THE ANIMATION
Between handling enormous assignments, dodging murderous volleyballs and enduring endless rivalries, summer vacation should serve as a welcome break for the weary student–unless your teachers come with you! Get ready for a serious lesson in laughter!
Volumes 1-4 Available Now!
Volume 5: Seniors! Releases 10/12/04
$29.98 SRP

Wedding Peach
Love is on the run as the wicked Lady Raindevila conspires to rid the world of romance and love. The world is turned upside down as lovers stab each other in the back. Armed with a mysterious ruby ring, the unsuspecting Momoko finds herself caught in the middle of this cosmic battle.
Volumes 1-6 Available Now!
Volume 7: Sorrow's Tears Releases 11/16/04
$29.98 SRP

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SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

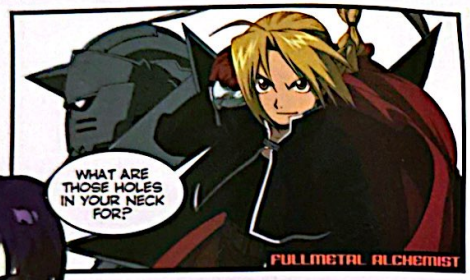
ADULT SWIM GIVES FANS THREE HOT PREMIERES TO DIVE INTO THIS FALL

Cartoon Network hates your social life. Starting this fall, you'll have to give up going out on Saturday nights if you want to catch the TV premieres of fan-favorite series *Fullmetal Alchemist*, *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* and *Read or Die*.

You'll be able to party until October 23rd, when Read or Die premieres, followed by *Stand Alone Complex* at 11 p.m. and *Alchemist* at 11:30 on November 6. "We think people will respond to these stories and love the animation," enthused Cartoon Network creative director Sean Akins. "The adult swim action fan should not be disappointed."

Set in a future where cybernetic enhancements are the norm and the line between human and machine is steadily blurring, *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* is the latest hit from anime studio Production I.G. Not tied to the acclaimed 1995 movie, Bandai's SAC follows Major Motoko Kusanagi and Section 9, an elite police division, as they deal with the crime brought about by this new, omnipresent technology.

The lauded *Fullmetal Alchemist* stars alchemic whiz kids Edward and Alphonse Elric on a quest to recover the Philosopher's Stone, the only item capable of replacing Ed's missing limbs and his younger brother Al's body, which they lost using forbidden alchemy in their ill-fated attempt to resurrect their dead mother. Made by Studio Bones (*Cowboy Bebop*) and licensed by FUNimation, the show was Japan's most popular new anime series.



FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST

NIGHT CREATURES *Stand Alone Complex*'s Motoko spends her Saturdays fighting crime while you stay in and watch.

Released by Manga Entertainment, fan-favorite *Read or Die* is a three episode OVA starring Yomiko Readman, a covert agent for the British Library, who can manipulate paper in deadly ways. She must stop a madman and his evil clones of minor historical figures from getting a book that would allow them to rule the world.

Together, these three series spell the end of your Saturday night partying—which is just fine with Akins. "Adult Swim thinks the world is too dangerous to go out at night," explained Akins. "You should stay in your homes, and watch your cable TVs!" ■ Robert Bricken & Caitlin Moriarity

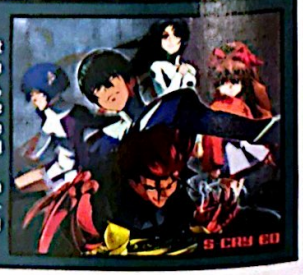
SINK OR 'SWIM'

BANDAI AND CARTOON NETWORK TEAM UP TO CREATE 'ADULT SWIM ON DEMAND'

The Anime Network isn't the only game in town anymore! At the 2004 Anime Expo, Bandai Entertainment announced a new video on demand (VOD) channel with Cartoon Network, understandably called Adult Swim on Demand. The pay channel, available to digital cable subscribers, will presented in association with Bandai's AnimeVillage.com; Bandai will be the exclusive anime content provider for the service, showing titles like *Witch Hunter Robin*, *The Big O* and VOD exclusive *s-CRY-ed* (right). Several of Adult Swim's original comedy cartoons, like *Aqua Teen Hunger Force* and *Space Ghost: Coast to Coast*, are also available.

"We think Video On Demand is another great way to extend Cartoon Network's Adult Swim brand and programming," said Paul Condolora, vice president, Cartoon Network New Media. "The benefits to the consumer of video on demand are obvious, and we think our mix of programming will be a very compelling offering."

Adult Swim on Demand is already available in select markets serviced by cable providers Comcast and Time Warner Cable; check your local listings. ■ CM


S CRY ED

Full Metal Alchemist © Hiromu Arakawa/SQUARE ENIX, MBS, ANX, BONES. Dream-a-CRY ed © Sunrise/Bandai • TX. Ghost in the Shell SAC © 2003-2004 Shinji Masamune-Production I.G/Kodansha. All Rights Reserved.

OF GUNDAMS AND GODDESSES

'SEED' SEQUEL AND 'AH! MY GODDESS!' LAUNCH THIS FALL

Wishes do come true apparently—at least for Japanese anime fans. This fall, otaku will be glued to two hot TV series, the sequel to ratings-smash *Gundam Seed* and a TV adaptation of Kosuke Fujishima's beloved manga *Ah! My Goddess*.

While details are scarce on the Seed sequel, it will be titled *Gundam Seed Destiny*, and premiere in October. The story of *Destiny* will be set two years after the epic conclusion of *Seed*, and will be directed by Mitsuo Fukuda, who helmed the original series. New main character Shin Asuka stars with returning cast Athrun Zala and Cagalli, with the new Impulse Gundam introduced for the sequel.

On the gentler side, the new *Goddess* TV series follows Keichi Morisato, who lives with three wildly different goddess: the bratty Skuld; the sexy Urd and the sweet Belldandy. The series will be produced by the same folks behind the *Ah! My Goddess* movie (released in America by Geneon Entertainment). Director Hiroaki Ghoda has said the show will closely follow the plots of Fujishima's manga, available in the U.S. as *Oh! My Goddess* by Dark Horse Comics, giving him 15-plus years of stories to animate. The series will premiere later this year.

Neither title has been announced for the U.S., but given the American fanbase for each series, both shows seem quite likely to cross the Pacific. ■ CM

AH! MY GODDESS

SITTING PRETTY Flay's on board the Strike Gundam, but could she be in the Seed sequel?

ANIME UPDATE

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON JAPANESE AIRWAVES?

Believe it or not, in Japan, most of your favorite anime are light years ahead of what you see on television here in America! In case you're curious just how things are going for your favorite characters over in the land of the rising sun, here's a quick rundown of their latest adventures.

FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST

ED ELRIC

The full might of the military attacks the fortress of the homunculus Greed, slaying his henchmen but giving the villain time to escape. Ed catches up to the fleeing Greed and brings him to his knees, ending Greed's life once and for all. Unfortunately, the eternally compassionate Ed has been trying to keep his foes alive.

INUYASHA

KAGOME & INUYASHA

Inuyasha and Kagome finally track down the final Sacred Jewel shard, sealed inside the body of the powerful and dangerous Hosenki. Inuyasha makes short work of the shard's hold over him, so Hosenki teaches Inuyasha a destructive new technique that allows him to finally break through Naraku's defenses, sending him reeling to the world of man!

NARUTO

Naruto and his perverted new teacher Jiraya continue their desperate struggle against the villainous forces of Itachi Uchiha, Sasuke's bloodthirsty brother who's hell-bent on getting his hands on the powerful Kyuuhi chakra sealed inside Naruto. Having brushed aside even Sasuke's devastating Chidori attack, is there anything that can bring Itachi down?

NARUTO

ONE PIECE

Luffy and Sanji are captured and held as prisoners on board the pirate ship Stanmaree. Jessica, the ship's beautiful head cook, challenges Sanji to a cooking duel with the ship's kitchen staff. Sanji, using only the ship's leftovers, whips up a mouth-watering meal that blows the competition out of the water. Luffy and Sanji are captured and held as prisoners on board the pirate ship Stanmaree. Jessica, the ship's beautiful head cook, challenges Sanji to a cooking duel with the ship's kitchen staff. Sanji, using only the ship's leftovers, whips up a mouth-watering meal that blows the competition out of the water. ■ Zac Bertschy & Rebecca Bundy

LUFFY AND CREW

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TUNE IN TOKYO

THE LATEST ANIME DEBUTS ON JAPANESE TV

FAFNER: DEAD AGGRESSOR

An idyllic island's last and best hope against bizarre yet beautiful alien invaders called Festum is the enigmatic robot Fafner, a symbiotic combat machine that can be piloted only by a select few. Enter Kizuki and Soushi, two skilled teenagers on whose brave and yet frightened shoulders rest the fate of their friends and family.

KENRAN BUTOU SAI: THE MARS DAYBREAK

In the distant future, the planet Mars is being terraformed for human colonization following a devastating intergalactic war that left the Earth in ruins. Our home planet has been rebuilt, but the watery surface of Mars remains an ecological and economic wasteland, one fraught with peril. Poverty-stricken but mechanically talented urchin Grahm struggles to join the crew of Mars' most feared pirate ship, The Daybreak, proving himself to the dread captain Elizabeth and embarking on the adventure of a lifetime. Also, there's a dolphin who pilots a mechanical suit. Seriously.

KURAU: PHANTOM MEMORY

An experiment gone awry has imbued 12-year old Kurau's body with two beings of pure energy that gift her with amazing power but endanger her fragile personality. Ten years later, Kurau is an agent for justice, using her innate power to stay ahead of the criminals...but will her body remain stable?

MADLAX

Bee Train, the studio responsible for hits like *.hack//SIGN* and *Noir* comes *Madlax*, complete with music from fan favorite composer Yuki Kajiura. Madlax is a hyper-competent, unbelievably gorgeous special ops agent who takes on the toughest of cases with the greatest of ease. Able to mow down an army of soldiers in a cocktail dress and still keep her cool, Madlax gets involved in a series of increasingly bizarre missions and has a strange connection to a girl named Margaret.

LOOK FAMILIAR? Fafner's character designs are by Hiroshi Hirai of *Gundam Seed* fame.

SEVENTH HEAVEN After recruiting Samurai #7, no other applicants were interviewed.

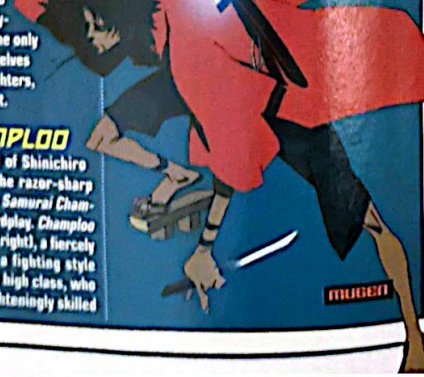
SAMURAI 7

This big-budget "re-imagining" of the classic film by Akira Kurosawa is animated in eye-popping glory by studio Gonzo (*Last Exile*, *Hellsing*). With 26 episodes and only airing twice a month, Samurai 7 follows an eclectic crew of samurai as they get hired by a poor village to protect them from bandits—who happen to come in huge, heavily-armed attack ships. That's no the only surprise, as the samurai themselves are made up of intergalactic fighters, mechanics and a fighting robot.

SAMURAI CHAMPLOO

From the terminally hip mind of Shinichiro Watanabe, the guy behind the razor-sharp cool of *Cowboy Bebop*, comes *Samurai Champloo*, a mix of hip-hop and swordplay. *Champloo* follows the exploits of Mugen (right), a fiercely delinquent swordsman with a fighting style that's more breakdancing than high class, who is determined to kill Jin, a frighteningly skilled traditional samurai with a quiet demeanor, who's equally irked by Mugen. But both samurai are put in an uneasy truce by Fuu, a clumsy waitress who enrolls the two warriors in a quest to find a samurai who smells like sunflowers. It's already been licensed by Geneon, so you won't have to wait for it long!

■ Zac Bertschy



Samurai Champloo © Manglobe/Funimation, Samurai 7 © 2004 Akira Kurosawa/Aico • GDH • Gonzo. Fafner © XEBEC • Ryuu Guerra Yakuba

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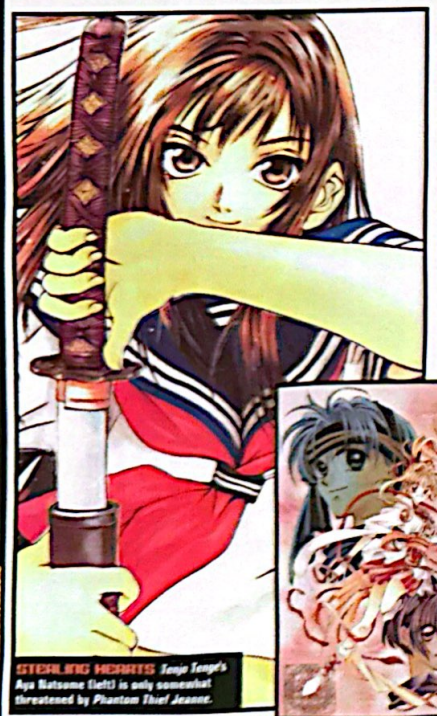
SUPERMAN-GA!

AMERICAN COMIC PUBLISHER DC COMICS JOINS THE MANGA RACE



STERLING HEARTS *Tenjo Tenge*'s Aya Natsume (left) is only somewhat threatened by *Phantom Thief Jeanne*.

American superheroes might be able to fly, but they haven't been able to match the sales of manga in American bookstores. Now, America's second largest comics publisher, DC Comics—home of icons like Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman—has declared their entrance into the manga fray with a new imprint titled CMX.

While DC has tried various experiments in manga before—most notably, their manga-inspired *Death: At Death's Door* graphic novel in 2003, as well as Kia Asamiya's original Batman story *Child of Dreams*—CMX will be a full line of manga licensed from Japan, not tied to DC characters.

"There's tremendous enthusiasm for manga in the States," stated Paul Levitz, president and publisher of DC Comics, in a recent press release. "New readers, particularly girls and women, have rushed to embrace new talent from abroad, which we're excited to bring to American audiences as part of the DC Comics' commitment to publishing diverse and exciting works from around the world."

The imprint launches in October with the fantasy action series *Madara*, shojo drama *Mekakshi no Kuni*, and the high-class adventure *Eroika Yori Ai Wo Komete*. Next spring, wave two of CMX's titles hit, including fan-favorite martial arts actioner *Tenjo Tenge, Gals* (whose anime is released as *SuperGals!* by ADV), the magical girl manga *Phantom Thief Jeanne*, *9 Banme no Musashi*, *Swan*, *Monster Collection* and *Akuma de Soro*. All titles will feature right-to-left formatting, and be presented in digest size.

"We believe that manga readership is going to continue its rapid growth and also evolve in the U.S.," said John Nee, vice president of business development at DC Comics. "CMX is committed to publishing all genre of manga including horror, fantasy, science fiction and adventure titles and the line will be as diverse, and as author friendly, as that of DC Comics, [and its imprints] Vertigo and WildStorm."

CMX's titles will be published on a quarterly schedule, so it's time to start staking out those bookstore shelves! ■ Zac Bertschy

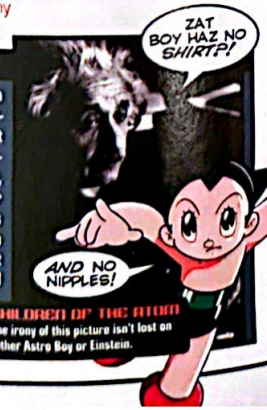
QUICK READS

PAGE TURNIN' NEWS CLIPS

POP GOES THE LICENSE At the Anime Expo 2004 in July, manga giant TOKYOPOP announced a colossal amount of new titles, including: *DearS*, a sci-fi romantic comedy from superstar manga team Peach Pit; *Hyper Police*, on which the hit anime series is based; *Lagoon Engine*, from the creator of *D•N•Angel*; and *RG Veda*, the first major work from studio CLAMP.

BLASTER MASTER Media Blasters' manga division also had a few licenses up its sleeve at Anime Expo 2004. Among them were *Volcano High*, based on the hit live-action film; *Baron Gang*, from the artist of *Battle Royale*; and *Pilgrim Jäger*, from the writer of the *Shenmue* video game series and featuring artwork from Capcom.

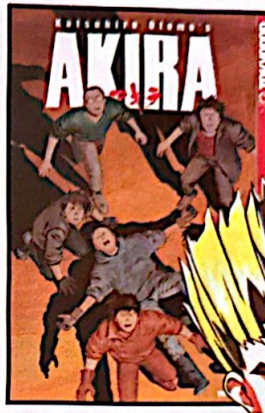
GOOD FOR YOU Digital Manga publishing has announced *Edu-Manga*, biographical manga about historical figures like Albert Einstein, Anne Frank, Helen Keller, Beethoven and even Mother Theresa, narrated by characters like Astro Boy. Whether the manga will delve into the rumor about Einstein's secret butt-mounted machine gun theory remains unknown. ■ ZB



CHILDREN OF THE ATOM The irony of this picture isn't lost on either Astro Boy or Einstein.

CINEMANGA SENSATION

WHY ANIME HAS BECOME THE BIGGEST THING IN MANGA



It's not quite manga and it's not quite anime—but it's the new big thing, as comic publishers are scrambling to publish "cine-manga," sequential images ripped straight from your favorite DVDs, with comic-style captions and word balloons added to the anime images.

It's a phenomenon that started when manga giant TOKYOPOP released *Akira* cine-manga in 2003, so much so that their phrase "cine-manga" has become synonymous with the entire format.

"We are absolutely gratified and thrilled by the success of the entire Cine-Manga line," said Steve Kleckner, vice president of sales and distribution for TOKYOPOP. "We never anticipated the huge distribution explosion this format has achieved." TOKYOPOP is expanding the line to include a variety of non-manga titles including *Spongebob Squarepants* (which recently saw a 250,000 unit sale to Scholastic), Fox's hit reality series *The Simple Life* and the Disney series *Kim Possible*.

Viz joined with the cine-manga release of Hayao Miyazaki's Academy Award-winning film *Spirited Away* and *Castle in the Sky*, as well as their hit anime series *Inuyasha*, for which the also publish the original manga.

Veteran comics publisher Dark Horse is now tossing their hat into the ring with *Trigun* "Animanga," due on shelves this October. According to editor Tim Ervin, *Trigun* was a natural choice for them because of the success of Yasuhiro Nightow's original manga.

Like TOKYOPOP, Dark Horse has more cine-manga titles planned. "Oh sure," promised Ervin. "We're looking at other Pioneer/Geneon Entertainment anime, and if we can start a solid program that customers support, I'm sure we'll continue to publish additional ani-manga." ■ Bamboo Dong

CINEPHILES Vash (right) takes aim at the hearts of manga fans everywhere.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION: THE MANGA VS THE ANIME

With such a mind-blowing ending, everyone has their own take on *Neon Genesis Evangelion*—not the least of which is character designer Yoshiyuki Sadamoto, who's been drawing the manga since 1995—and still isn't finished! With the TV series (released by ADV) long over, Sadamoto's included so many new scenes into the Viz-released manga of Shinji Ikari's psychological misadventures piloting his powerful EVA unit against invading Angels, it's a totally different story.

EVANGELION MANGA

BIRD'S THE WORD NERV captain Misato explains in the manga how she found her pet Pen-Pen as an experimental animal where she previously worked, just as they were about to put him to sleep. In the anime, you never exactly find out how or why a warm-water penguin sleeps in her refrigerator.

KISS AND TELL In the anime, fellow pilot Asuka dares Shinji into his first kiss—with her, no less—while waiting for Misato and Kaji to return from a wedding party in the series. In the manga, however, they nearly kiss while the base is in a blackout, and only stop when they see Misato and Kaji in an elevator *almost* kissing too!

EVANGELION ANIME

GUYS' NIGHT OUT Kaji and Shinji have a heart-to-heart pep talk while watering watermelons during an Angel attack in the anime. In the manga, Kaji drives him to an aquarium where he reveals both NERV's and the EVA unit's origins, and tells him about his mother's mysterious death.

ASUKA STRIKES Asuka appears about a fourth of the way into the anime series, aboard a United Nations aircraft carrier carrying her own Evangelion Unit 02 to Japan. In the manga, she appears much earlier, to kick some punks' butts after playing at an arcade! ■ Miguel A. L. Esquivel

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COMING COMICS

MANGA TO WATCH FOR THIS FALL!

SEPTEMBER

AI YORI AOSHI VOL. 5
Aoi and Karou's relationship is put to the test yet again when the gang takes a trip to the zoo. Will their love prevail after Karou is placed in an exhibit with Tina? Kou Fumizuki (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL #53
Bloody battles are unavoidable as Iryia and Makie have a showdown. Meanwhile, Magatsu and Manji clash with the remaining Shingyoto-ryu swordsman. Hiroaki Samura (Dark Horse, $2.95)

CARDCAPTOR SAKURA VOL. 2
Sakura's card-capturing missions are thrown askew when a mysterious transfer student named Li shows up at her school. CLAMP (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

DARK EDGE VOL. 1
When Yutsuji and his classmates inadvertently break school rules and wander the campus after dark, they fall victim to a faculty zombie attack! Yu Aikawa (ComicsOne, $9.95)

EERIE QUEERIE! VOL. 4
Mitsuo's efforts to get closer to Hasunuma are cut short when his parents announce they're moving. In an effort to stay, Mitsuo gets hired as a French maid for a boss that has the hots for him! Shuri Shiozu (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

GTO VOL. 20
There's a new principal at school and her first order of business is to demote Onizuka to assistant teacher. Will Onizuka be able to stay ahead of the class or has the great teacher finally met his match? Tohru Fujisawa (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

HELLSING VOL. 4
For the first time, the Protestant Hellsing Organization and the Catholic Iscariot Agency may have to team up. The first World War of the undead is building up! Kohta Hirano (Dark Horse, $13.95)

DRACULA SPELLED BACKWARDS
Alucard and Integra sure do love their firearms.

HIKARU NO GO VOL. 2
Hikaru and Sai are introduced to a whole new world of Go players, thanks to the Haze Go club; it's a new challenge, bringing new friends and new enemies. Yumi Hotta & Takeshi Obata (Viz, $7.95)

INSTANT TEEN: JUST ADD NUTS VOL. 1
After Natsumi Kawashima eats a bag of pink nuts, she turns into a sexy woman. Armed with a bombshell body and the mind of a child, Natsumi discovers being hot is not all it's cracked up to be. Haruka Fukushima (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

OH MY GODDESS! #112
Keiichi's experience is put to the test and Sora's racing ability shines as the go-kart race comes to its conclusion. Kosuke Fujishima (Dark Horse, $3.99)

PET SHOP OF HORRORS VOL. 8
A murderous mermaid, a moderating mongrel, and a case of déjà vu—Detective Leon is still after the elusive Count D as three more cases present themselves. Matsuri Akino (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

RUROUNI KENSHIN VOL. 8
Kenshin finally leaves for Kyoto against the wishes of his friends, including a teary-eyed Kaoru who says a heart-wrenching goodbye among the last fireflies of a forgotten summer. (Viz, $7.95)

SAIKANO VOL. 2
Sapporo is attacked by invaders from another country and it's up to a genetically-modified, angst-ridden Chise to take them out. Shin Takahashi (Viz, $9.95)

SAIYUKI VOL. 4
The entire group falls victim after Yisou pits

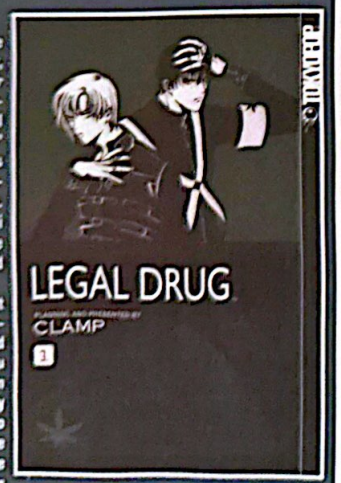
HOT PICK

LEGAL DRUG VOL. 1

By CLAMP (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

WHAT IT'S ABOUT Rikuou and Kazahaya are mere employees at the Green Drug pharmacy, but their manager Kakei has "other jobs" for them as well. Luckily for them, they have supernatural abilities—Rikuou can destroy small objects with telekinesis and Kazahaya can "see" things by touching objects—to handle tasks like locating an old book, gathering rare fireflies, and watching a scene from an old movie. Egged on by his affectionate cohort Saiga, Kakei continues giving Rikuou and Kazahaya strange assignments that push the pair's abilities and willingness to work together as a team.

WHY IT'S COOL One word—CLAMP. Mix in hot guys (who have no qualms about showing affection), and the light artwork of Mick Nekoi and you have a beautiful, engrossing read. Rikuou and Kazahaya's obvious relationship friction jives with the series' humor, and there's plenty of room for character development since so many questions have yet to be answered. The "other jobs" Kakei and Saiga find seem to serve as a launch pad for unlocking the mysteries behind each of the four men. CLAMP is an expert at combining love and intrigue with clairvoyant flair, and this is just a small taste of the goodies to come! ■ Liann Cooper



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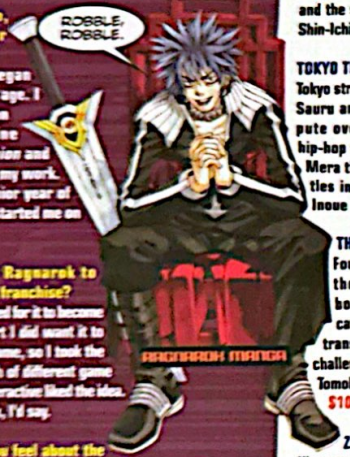
GETTING TO KNOW

MYUNG-JIN LEE

Creator of the successful TOKYOPOP manga *Ragnarok*, Myung-Jin Lee never intended to spawn an empire. The Korea native's fantastical manga take on Nordic myth has spawned a wildly popular online RPG, and even a TV anime series, the first ever series to be produced by Japan based on a Korean property. We had a sit-down with Lee to find out what makes him tick.



Anime Insider: So, how'd you get your start in manga?
Myung-Jin Lee: I began drawing at an early age. I sent my artwork to an animation magazine called *News Champion* and they selected me for my work. I started that my senior year of high school and that started me on my career.

Did you intend for Ragnarok to become such a huge franchise?
Well, I can't say I intended for it to become this big. From the start I did want it to become a computer game, so I took the idea around to a bunch of different game companies. Gravity Interactive liked the idea. I've had very good luck, I'd say.

How do you feel about the American fans?
Oh, I'm very happy to see them! To see all the American fans playing the game and reading the manga and cosplaying and talking about Ragnarok makes me very happy indeed. It also means I have more people to please so I need to work on making my product better.

What's your favorite junk food?
I just love hamburgers!

them not only against himself, but also against each other. Kazuya Minekura (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

SHONEN JUMP VOL. 2 #11
The further adventures of *Naruto*, *One Piece*, *Hikaru no Go*, *Shaman King*, *Dragon Ball Z* and *Yu-Gi-Oh!*. Various (Viz, $4.99)

STONE VOL. 1
Gigi possesses the ability to see through sand, which offers a glimmer of hope for her tribe. Food has become scarce and the survival of her people rest on her and the sand pirate Sabu's shoulders. Shin-Ichi Hiromoto (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

TOKYO TRIBES VOL. 1
Tokyo street gangs the Musashinokuni Sauru and the Bukuro Wu-Ronz dispute over territory in this gritty, hip-hop series. Follow Kai, Tera, and Mera through their bloody turf battles in the concrete jungle. Santa Inoue (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

THE WALLFLOWER VOL. 1
Four handsome guys are given the chance to stay in a ritzy boarding house for free. The catch? They have three years to transform the landlord's fashion-challenged niece into a proper lady! Tomoko Hayakawa (Del Rey Manga, $10.95)

ZATCH BELL VOL. 1
Kiyomaro Takamine is a brilliant high school student who finds himself bored with life...until he meets Zatch, an odd boy with an amazing magic tome that allows Kiyomaro to cast devastating spells! Makoto Raiku (Viz, $9.95)

OCTOBER

BERSERK VOL. 5
Guts and Griffith's fierce rivalry is put on hold as they both confront the vicious beast Nosferatu Zodd. Kentaro Miura (Dark Horse, $13.95)

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL #94
The Last Blood Arc comes to its conclusion as Iriya, Makie, Manji and Magatsu's swordfights come to a gory end. Hiroaki Samura (Dark Horse, $2.99)

DIABLO VOL. 1
Ren and Rai sold their souls to the devil to save Ren's cousin, Mio. Now Ren has ultimate defense and Rai has ultimate offense, but Diablo owns their souls and they're destined to darkness forever. Kaoru Ohashi, Kei Kusunoki (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

DRAGON VOICE VOL. 1
Rin Amami has a horrible singing voice and bombs his audition for the musical group Beat Men. However, the president of the troupe thinks Rin possesses the legendary Dragon Voice and gives him a chance. Yuriko Nishiyama (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

FRUITS BASKET VOL. 5
Tohru and the boys take a trip to the lake. Can Tohru calm the waves between Yuki and Kyo or are rough waters ahead? Natsuki Takaya (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

GRAVITATION VOL. 8
Shuichi is flying high with a platinum album and a date with Eiri. However, things take a nose-dive after Eiri breaks up with him. Shuichi then finds himself kidnapped and on a plane to the U.S.! Maki Murakami (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

NOW VOL. 5
By-Ryu, Rin and the gang continue to fend off those who seek the secret of Sashinmu. Battles and memories keep finding their way into the group's path and hinder their journey. Sung-woo Park (ComicsOne, $9.95)

THE ONE I LOVE
A 12-story anthology, this CLAMP work delves into the many aspects of love. Featuring a special eight-page full-color feature and based on the artists' own personal experiences. CLAMP (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

OTHELLO VOL. 1
Ya-Ya has lived her entire life as a meek pushover. One day her other personality, Na-Na, comes out and she's ready to kick some major butt. Satomi Ikezawa (Del Rey, $10.95)

RAVE MASTER VOL. 11
Haru and the gang are struggling under the scorching desert sun. When a mysterious man appears claiming to be a Dark Bring Master, he steals the trust and a kiss, from one of our heroes. Hiro Mashima (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

SAMURAI EXECUTIONER VOL. 2
Samurai Kubikiri Asa has a reputation for dispatching his victims in the most brutal way possible. Bloody, torturous, and evil, this is not a story for the faint of heart. Kazuo Koike, Goseki Kojima (Dark Horse, $9.95)

Regrets © Myung-Jin Lee • Mac Entertainment

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LIVE-ACTION LIVES!

'DRAGON BALL Z,' 'SPEED RACER' FILMS BACK ON HOLLYWOOD TRACK

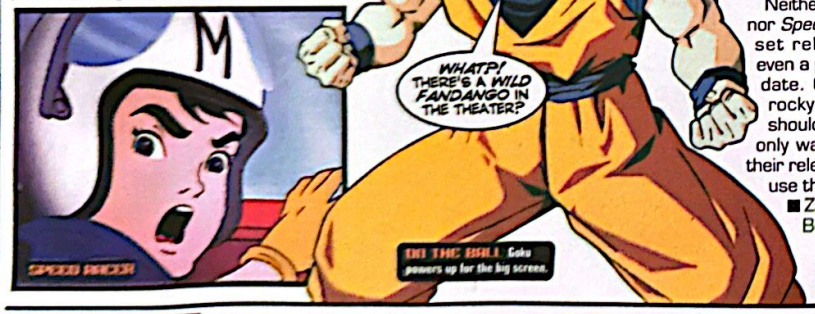
Two live-action anime movie projects thought lost in the limbo of pre-production are back on schedule as new information has been revealed on the Hollywood adaptations of *Dragon Ball Z* and *Speed Racer*.

Although recent rumors has debunked the film as nonexistent, *Daily Variety* reports that 20th Century Fox's long-rumored live-action production of Akira Toriyama's massively popular action epic *Dragon Ball Z* is finally on the way; the film is being scripted thanks to a $500,000 screenwriting deal with Ben Ramsey, the man behind the 1998 Mark Wahlberg action vehicle *The Big Hit* and Marvel's upcoming *Luke Cage* film. The production is being handled by Fox's Vice President of Production Peter Kang.

Also racing back into production is the live-action *Speed Racer* movie, based on the 1967 anime classic. The film has languished in development at Warner Brothers, even supposedly starring Johnny Depp at one point, and has passed through directors like Gus Van Sant (*Good Will Hunting*) and Alfonso Cuaron (*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*).

Speed Racer has stalled several times over the large budget needed for extended racing sequences, but *Dodgeball* and *Old School* star Vince Vaughn may have given it the green light. "I've been a fan of the show since I was a kid and I always liked the theme of the protective older brother who can't reveal his identity," said Vaughn, according to the Reuters news service. Vaughn will act as executive director, and hopes to play Speed's older brother, Racer X, who maintains an enigmatic presence throughout the show. Reportedly, Vaughn's take on the film will focus more on character development than high-speed racing, which will help bring down the film's potentially costly budget.

Neither *Dragon Ball Z* nor *Speed Racer* have a set release date, or even a production start date. Given the films' rocky histories, fans should be warned the only way to guarantee their release would be to use the Dragon Balls. ■ Zac Bertschy



ON THE BALL Goku powers up for the big screen.

THE BUZZ

HAVE YOU HEARD THE LATEST?

MOVIEHOLIC A feature film is reportedly in the works for 2005 based on the popular CLAMP manga title *XXXHolic*. The manga, released by Del Rey in America, follows the surreal adventures of a wish-granting witch named Yuko who takes a confused lad in her employ; the best-selling title crosses over with another blockbuster CLAMP title, *Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicle*.

BRAVE INVESTMENT Financed by American media juggernaut Buena Vista International, anime powerhouse Sozzo Digimation will be producing a film called *Brave Story*, based on the popular novels by Miyuke Miyuki about a boy who enters the spirit world in order to save his mother from certain death. The film's budget is projected to be $10 million dollars (about one billion yen).

PRINCE OF THEATERS Yet another film based on a long-running, ultra-popular manga series is due out in 2005; this time, it's the sports anime *Prince of Tennis*, published by Viz in America. No word yet on whether the film will continue the events seen in the prime time TV animated series also based on the manga or if it'll be a completely separate side story. ■ ZB

SWEET PRINCE The *Prince of Tennis*' cast poses for its close-up.

ON WITH THE SHIROW!

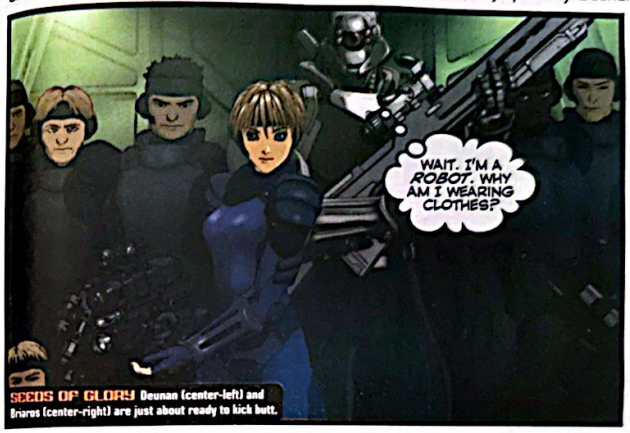
'APPLESEED' FINALLY READY FOR AMERICAN PREMIERE

Opening to rave reviews and respectable box office this past April in Japan, the CG-animated *Appleseed* film is finally coming to U.S. shores. Licensor Geneon Entertainment plans to release an English-dubbed version of the movie to theaters in late 2004, although a subtitled version is still under discussion.

The film is an original story based on the 1985 manga by *Ghost in the Shell* scribe Masamune Shirow, which chronicles the struggle of officers Deunan Knute and partner Briaros as they endeavor to keep terrorists from hacking in to the central computer that controls their hometown, Olympus City. Deunan and Briaros have to grapple with the notion that maybe the terrorists' cause is a worthy one—as well as adjusting to their romantic relationship now that Briaros' mind is in a totally metal, only somewhat humanoid body.

Directed by Shinji Aramaki, the film has been hailed for its use of 3D CG in capturing the look and feel of Japanese cel animation, attributed to the expertise of Fumihiko Sori, who was the effect supervisor on James Cameron's mega- blockbuster *Titanic*, as well production company Micott & Basara. Two sequels to the film are already in production in Japan.

Appleseed will open in New York and Los Angeles before the end of the year, followed by an expanded theatrical run. ■ ZB



SEEDS OF GLORY! Deunan (center-left) and Briaros (center-right) are just about ready to kick butt.

CASTING CALL: 'COWBOY BEBOP'

WHO SHOULD STAR IN A LIVE-ACTION COWBOY BEBOP?

Only a few anime movies ever make it out of Japan. Here's a look (okay, so it may not exist yet or have even been hinted at by any big studios), but we just couldn't help but speculate who'll play the leads in a hypothetical Cowboy Bebop movie!

MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY as SPIKE SPIEGEL

McConaughey not only looks the part, he plays a laid-back, ruggedly handsome guy in *Ve[illegible] To Lose a Guy in 10 Days* and [illegible] learning [illegible]-hand combat for his lead role in the upcoming [illegible]. All he needs is an ever-present cigarette [illegible] Spike material to us.

ELISHA CUTHBERT as FAYE VALENTINE

Cuthbert tears up the screen as a party-hearty vixen in *The Girl Next Door*, so she's perfect for the role of sassy, scantily clad Faye Valentine. Just dye her hair black (and maybe start her on those spacecraft piloting lessons) and she'll be our Valentine forever.

MICHAEL IRONSIDE as JET BLACK

Okay, so he needs bigger sideburns for the role, but Ironside plays the deep-voiced, rough-and-tumble guy in *Robocop*, *Starship Troopers* and, like, every other movie he's ever been in. We think he'd have Jet's voice and calm-yet-somewhat-menacing demeanor down pat.

ASHLEY OLSEN as ED

Ashley might not know her way around computers the same way Ed does, but they're both uncommonly slender, they both have big (and somewhat frightening) smiles, and they both have orange hair. Okay, sometimes.

TOM CRUISE as VICIOUS

He knows his way around a sword (check out *The Last Samurai*), and he's on a mean streak in *Collateral*, so why not Hollywood's top-shelf leading man as Spike's ex-partner in crime and arch-nemesis, Vicious?

Got an idea for your own Casting Call? Send us your picks at animeinsider@aol.com! ■ ZB

Cowboy Bebop © Sunrise / Bones / Bandai Visual Appleseed © Masamune Shirow / Seishinsha / TBS

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SEEING 'RED'

'RED NINJA' A LOT MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY, DEADLY FACE

Red Ninja: End of Honor may have the hottest female ninja in it since *Dead or Alive*, but this game has a lot more in its arsenal than good looks. Written and directed by Shinsuke Sato (director of *Princess Blade*, released by ADV Films), Vivendi Universal's game mixes some seriously unique gameplay with its pretty face.

The voluptuous title character of *Red Ninja*, Kurenai is on a quest to defeat the Black Lizard clan and avenge the death of her father in turbulent 1500s Japan. Her primary method of achieving her revenge is the Tetsugen, a wire weapon that has a multitude of deadly uses—Kurenai can attach it to foes from a distance, tearing off limbs and heads; she use it to hang enemies from roof beams; or she can use it for more mundane things like leaping across chasms or climbing buildings.

Red Ninja utilizes an equal mix of action and stealth, as Kurenai can run in with her Tetsugen blazing, or sneak up on enemies to administer one of several bloody stealth-kills.

Kurenai will also have access to several other ninja-esque weapons throughout the game, including blowguns, explosives and more; plus, her training as a ninja allows her to pull off moves like running on walls, walking across water, and lurking in the shadows to elude guards—or kill them, as well as traversing some of the platform-style elements found in the large area settings of the game.

Also in her impressive arsenal are the arts of disguise, stealth, and flirting—with the proper costume (say, a geisha outfit), Kurenai's feminine wiles can also be a weapon in this game, distracting and manipulating enemies.

"The story had a movie-like charm to it," explained Sato. "We are already using many settings, charms, and tricks that can be dramatized to make a movie like no one has ever seen before. If we were going to make a movie out of this game, I think it would be a wonderful product."

Red Ninja sneaks onto the Xbox in October, and the PS2 in January 2005. ■ Robert Bricken & Dominic Nguyen

NINJA TOLL. Kurenai slices and dices (right), but is equally happy sneaking around (left).

BITS OF BYTES — THE LATEST WORD ON GAMING

DBZ GOES FOR 3 Everyone's eagerly awaiting the third PS2 *Dragon Ball Z: Budokai* game, but publisher Atari is keeping it pretty secretive. All that's known for sure is that DBZ-movie characters have been added to the 3D fighter, such as fan-favorite Broly. You can check out the exclusive screenshots of the game at www.dragonballz.com.

THE JAM THICKENS Capcom *Fighting Jam*, the new 2D fighting game by Capcom, got a few new characters officially added to the mix. Besides *Street Fighter* stalwarts Ryu and Chun Li, the new fighters include Russian wrestler Zangief, *Darkstalkers'* mummy Anakaris, SF3's Urien and *SF Alpha's* Karin. The game is due this winter on PS2 and Xbox.

BANG THE DRUM QUICKLY An established hit in Japan for years, Namco's rhythm game *Taiko Drum Master* is U.S. bound, utilizing a special drum controller. While the music list is unknown, Namco promises that the soundtrack will include Japanese pop and folk as well as American hits, and is due in October. ■ RB & DN

'GENERATION' GAP

SUIT UP YOUR CYCLONE IN ROBOTECH'S RETURN

The Earth has been conquered by aliens, so what's a guy and his power armor/transforming motorcycle to do? Start shooting.

Set in Robotech's third saga, *New Generation*, *Invasion* pits you and your Cyclone armor against the Invid occupation of the planet. The game combines first-person shooting with third-person vehicular driving as you change from armor to motorcycle mode, blasting authentic Robotech enemies through 15 missions.

Programmed by the folks who did *Robotech: Battlecry*, *Invasion* gives plenty of nods to the anime's fans. "Most of the towns depicted in the original anime are also present in the game, including Reflex Point," promised game designer Matt Grieg. "Scott Bernard and Lancer both make appearances in the single player game, as does the Invid Regess."

The *Invasion* arrives in October on PS2 and Xbox. ■ RB

ROBOTECH: INVASION

GRAVE TIDINGS

'GUNGRAVE' RESURRECTED

You can't keep a good guy from returning from the dead to seek revenge on those who wronged him, as game publisher Mastiff will release Sega's *Gungrave: Overdose* in the U.S. this October.

GUNGRAVE: OVERDOSE

Featuring the same character design by *Trigun* creator Yasuhirow Nightow, *Overdose* again follows undead anti-hero Beyond-the-Grave as he lays waste to the Corsione family's plot to take over the world. But the focus is on intense shooting action, as players control Beyond-the-Grave to shoot everything that moves using his massive arsenal of guns and artillery-based special attacks. Artistic Points are awarded for especially stylish destruction, and can be turned in for power-ups and flashier moves.

For the less interactive adventures of Beyond-the-Grave, fans can check out the Gungrave anime series, currently being released by Geneon Entertainment. ■ DN

TO IMPORT OR NOT TO IMPORT?

BRING IT!

FLAME OF RECCA: FINAL BURNING (GAMECUBE)

HOW TO PLAY: Relive the final arc of *Flame of Recca's* story, engaging in a series of one-on-one battles. It's more of a rock-paper-scissors game than a true fighting game—choose your action from a list of signature attacks and defensive maneuvers, then watch as ninja Recca, the burly Domon, pretty-boy Fuko or unstable Tokiya performs it in a beautifully animated sequence.

ANALYSIS: While a little light on gameplay, *Final Burning* is great for the *Flame of Recca* fan. It's eerily similar to playing an episode of the anime, and it's a great time to import since Viz is planning on bringing the anime stateside this fall. There's no better way to see why *Flame of Recca* made such a fuss in Japan!

KEEP IT!

YOSHINOYA (GAMECUBE)

HOW TO PLAY: If you've ever been to one of Yoshinoya's many beefbowl restaurants in America or Japan, you pretty much know what to expect from this game. You play as a beefbowl-slinging food service worker, and it's your task to master a series of mini-games wherein you'll take orders, dispense tea, make beefbowls and deal with irate customers. Free Mode and Mission Mode are pretty much the same when it comes to serving beef, but at least the Yoshinoya quiz game is a nice change of pace.

ANALYSIS: Leave it to the Japanese to make poor nostril grooming into a super power. While perversely attractive, *Bobobobo Bobobo* is simply too strange to handle, and should only be played if you happen to like making your brain melt.

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RELEASE SCHEDULE

WE PICK 'EM, YOU PLAY 'EM. HERE'S WHAT'S COMING SOON...

SEPTEMBER

DDR EXTREME
Dance Dance Revolution isn't just for your feet anymore! With the EyeToy camera, *DDR Extreme* lets you put your arms into the mix to become the ultimate dance sensation. Expect a load of new tunes, too. (Konami, PS2)

DRAGON BALL Z: BUU'S FURY
This installment brings the Buu story to life in the *Legacy of Goku* action/RPG style. Playing as Goku, Vegita, Gohan, Goten, Trunks and two special Fusion characters, bring peace to Earth once and for all. (Atari, GBA)

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4: EMPIRES
Koei melds its hyperactive Dynasty Warriors formula with the more sedate *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, but don't worry—the action is as fast and furious as ever. (Koei, PS2)

FINAL FANTASY XI: CHAINS OF PROMATHIA
The second expansion to *Final Fantasy XI* brings players a plethora of new content. From the mystic ruins of Pso'Xja to gorgeous Bibiki Bay, characters will meet exciting new people.... and slay monsters for them. (Square Enix, PC/PS2)

GHOST HUNTER
Namco tests the murky waters of the survival horror genre with an action game set in Detroit. Play as Lazarus Jones and try to contain the ghostly plague you've unwittingly unleashed on the world, capturing them and using their own powers against them. (GBA, Nintendo)

GUILTY GEAR X2 RELOAD
For Xbox owners who envy PS2 gamers for their *Guilty Gear*, the pain is over. Not only is the updated, re-balanced version of *Guilty Gear X2* coming to your console, it's bringing Xbox Live capability, so you can do battle over your Internet connection. (Majesco, Xbox)

GUNDAM SEED: BATTLE ASSAULT
Giant robot combat comes to the tiniest console with *Gundam Seed*. The first Gundam game on the GBA, Battle Assault lets up to four players duke it out over link cables. Playing as Strike, Aegis and 10 other mobile suits, prove your mastery of Gundam piloting over seven game play modes. (Bandai, GBA)

GUNDAM SEED: BATTLE ASSAULT

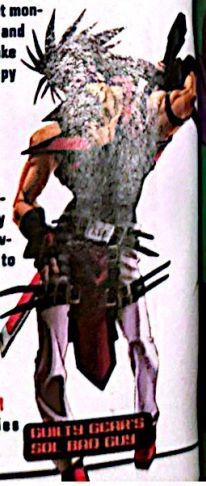
KING OF FIGHTERS: MAXIMUM IMPACT
In its post-Neo Geo era, SNK looks to revitalize its flagship game with its first 3D offering. Play as Kyo, Iori, and a host of both familiar and new characters as they brawl in fully 3D environments to earn the title of King of Fighters. (SNK Playmore, PS2)

MEGA MAN X: COMMAND MISSION
Ever searching for new genres to conquer, Capcom's Blue Bomber now stars in a traditional turn-based RPG. Along with Axl, Zero and a host of trusty allies, explore the cel-shaded, 3D world of Giga City and thwart the plans of the Liberion Army. (Capcom, PS2/GameCube)

POKÉMON FIRE RED & LEAF GREEN
The original Pokémon returns, updated for the GBA. With over 300 pocket monsters to collect and battle and a host of extras, this remake should keep Pokéfans happy for months on end. (Nintendo, GBA)

SHIN MEGAMI TENSAI: NOCTURNE
In a post-apocalyptic version of Tokyo, a young boy awakens with strange powers. Using demonic allies to grant him strange new abilities, he can shape a future for the remnants of humanity. (Atlus, PS2)

SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM
Konami's horror series


GUILTY GEAR'S SOL BAD GUY

HOT PICK

KINGDOM HEARTS: CHAIN OF MEMORIES

Coming September 27 from Square Enix on GBA

Kingdom Hearts II has been delayed until 2005, but fear not, Square Enix and Disney fans! The story of Sora and his keyblade continues on the Game Boy Advance with Chain of Memories.

Picking up right where the first game left off, Sora searches for his friends Kairi and Sora. The combat system now relies on cards, which determine the strength of Sora's attacks, as well as summon pals like Donald Duck, Goofy and even Cloud into fights. The game takes place from an isometric view, and promises to be very similar to the action platformer style of the original; Sora must climb, leap and puzzle his way through dozens of Disney movie locales, all while fending off seemingly endless hordes of Heartless.

Square Enix promises Chain of Memories will bridge the gap between the two PS2 games, as well as introduce a few characters that you'll see again in the sequel. If you want the full Kingdom Hearts story, you've gotta get *Chain of Memories*. ■ ON

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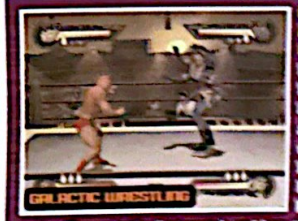
HOT TIPS

SECRETS FOR THE BEST GAMERS ONLY

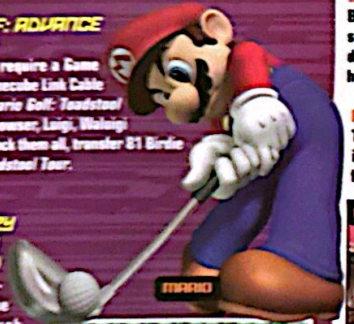


GALACTIC WRESTLING (PS2)

If you're looking for King Muscle in his cool Commander togs, start a team battle match with Ramanman, Beetlebomb, Robin Mask, Neptuneman and King Muscle in that order. Then win the first match and lose the next, so that each character on your team wins one bout, ending with King Muscle.

MARIO GOLF: ADVANCE TOUR (GBA)

Four characters require a Game Boy Advance-Gamecube Link Cable and a copy of *Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour* to unlock: Bowser, Luigi, Waluigi and Wario. To unlock them all, transfer 81 Birdie Badges from *Toadstool Tour*.



MEGAMAN ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION (GAMECUBE)

Two more Mega-Man games can be unlocked through the course of the game. *MegaMan: The Power Fighters* is playable after defeating the eight Robot Masters of *MegaMan 3*, and *MegaMan 2: The Power Battle* becomes available after defeating the first four Robot Masters in *MegaMan 7*.

METAL SLUG 3 (XBOX)

To unlock two new levels, simply complete the game on normal difficulty. At the main menu, two new options will open—"Chubby Isle Paradise" and "Storming the Mothership."

WAY OF THE SAMURAI 2 (PS2)

Make your samurai look like any character in the game by highlighting the "Name Selection" option and quickly pressing L1, R1, R2, L2, L1, R1, R2, L2, then Square. After doing so, push left or right to choose whatever look you want. ■ DN

tries out a new setting for its fourth outing. Henry Townsend wakes up locked in his own home, and a bloody warning on his front door simply says "Don't go out." Can he escape his domestic nightmare? (Konami, PS2/Xbox)

SNK VS. CAPCOM: SVC CHAOS

Aliens, ninjas and witches, oh my! SNK's version of the Capcom/SNK crossover brawler comes to the Xbox with a bang, bringing with it a quirky lineup of fighters pulled from Capcom and SNK's long history of games. (SNK Playmore, Xbox)

OCTOBER

BLOOD WILL TELL

Based on Osamu Tezuka's classic manga *Dororo, Blood Will Tell* is the story of Hyakkimaru, a samurai whose limbs have been replaced with deadly weapons. With his friend Dororo, he must slash his way through hundreds of demons to restore his humanity. (Sega, PS2)

BOKTAI 2: SOLAR BOY DJANGO

The sun is once again in your hands! With Boktai's unique sunlight-sensing system, traverse dangerous lairs and hunt vampires using the yellow face's rays to power up over 60 different weapons. (Konami, GBA)

COWBOY BEBOP

Do we really need to tell you why you should play this game? Is it not enough that you can play as Spike Spiegel and Jet Black as they hunt bounties in search of their next meal? That's what we thought. (Bandai, PS2)

OTOGI 2

The sequel to last year's Xbox gem puts players back in the role of mystic samurai Raikoh as they fight their way through Japanese folklore. This time out, Raikoh is not alone in his mission, as at least four more characters are ready to join in on the action. (Sega, Xbox)

SD GUNDAM FORCE

As a member of the elite Gundam Force, Neotopia needs your help in the fight against the Dark Axis. The PS2 version puts you in a 3D battlefield, while the GBA version offers side scrolling action. (Bandai, PS2/GBA)

YU YU HAKUSHO: DARK TOURNAMENT

Enter the Dark Tournament as Yusuke, Hiei, Kurama and the rest put their lives on the line in the battle arena. Using their trademark moves, fight your way to the top with either Team Urameshi or your favorite characters. (Atari, PS2)

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STUFF

THE BEST AND WORST PRODUCTS

AN APPLE A DAY

Sure, you could commit an act of terrorism in order to get *Appleseed: The Movie*'s Briareos and Deunan on your case, or you can wait for the toys. Briareos, Deunan and a special Gugess robot figure feature 17 points of articulation for only $24.99 each, for easy posing/crime-busting. **www.yamatotoysusa.com**

PLAY WITH YOUR FOOD

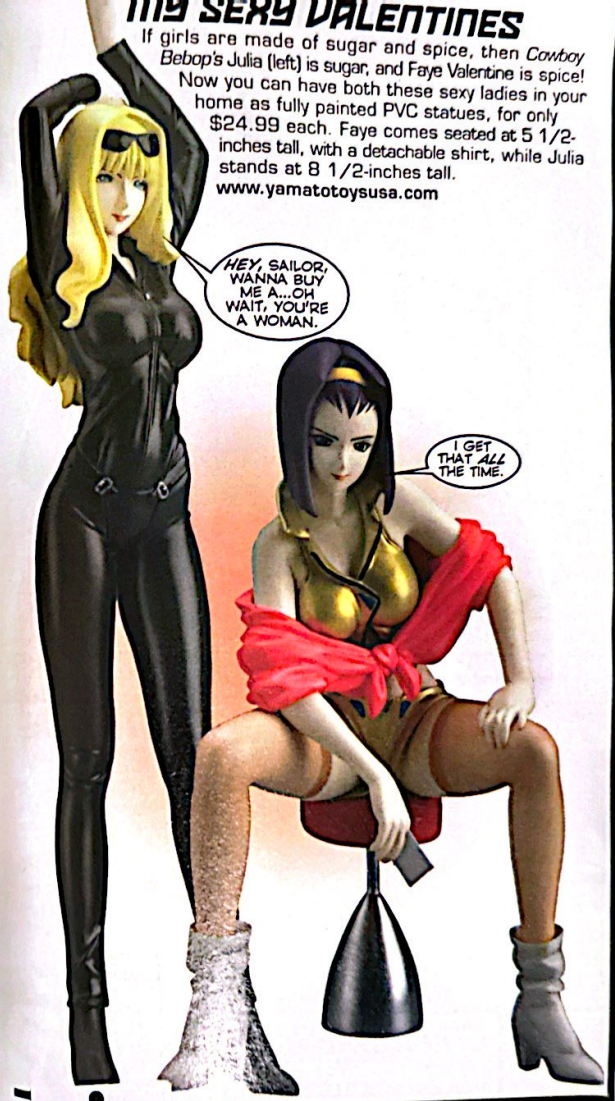
He's super-cute! He's super-soft! And he's delicious to eat! We mean, huggable! Everyone's favorite miserable pet dog and emergency food supply from *Excel Saga* needs a new home! *Any* home! Make her yours for only $14.99, and we guarantee you'll never go hungry again. **www.advtoys.com**

CATS, RATS & HATS

Guaranteed to become the hit of the convention circuit this summer, these *Fruits Basket* Kyo and Yuki caps feature the two feuding relatives in their cursed cat and mouse animal forms. Available at the summer conventions, for only $15! **www.funimation.com**

MY SEXY VALENTINES

If girls are made of sugar and spice, then *Cowboy Bebop*'s Julia (left) is sugar, and Faye Valentine is spice! Now you can have both these sexy ladies in your home as fully painted PVC statues, for only $24.99 each. Faye comes seated at 5 1/2-inches tall, with a detachable shirt, while Julia stands at 8 1/2-inches tall. **www.yamatotoysusa.com**



HAPPILY EVA AFTER

Who needs EVA Units and A.T. Fields, when you've got Rei (left) and Asuka dressed like this to stop monsters in their tracks? Sculpted by the artist "Grimlock" for Kaiyodo's biannual Wonder Showcase line, these PVC *Neon Genesis Evangelion* Rei and Asuka Figure Sets stand 6-inches tall and are only $19.99 a pair. **www.kaiyodo.net**

GUNDAMMIT

Rule the land, seas, skies and space with the new Gundam 8-inch Action Figures, for $17.99! Launcher Strike Gundam, Duel Gundam, Sword Strike Gundam, Blitz Gundam and Buster Gundam all have over 30 points of articulation—perfect for posing, or battling it out with their own unique weapons. **www.bandai.com**

STRAP IT TO ME

Assassins have never been so adorable! Choose from two sets of PVC figures featuring *Noir*'s Mirielle and Kirika with their guns! The best thing is, you can use them as keychains or attach them to your backpack and cellphone for protection on the go. **www.softgarage.com**

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GOOD VIBRATIONS

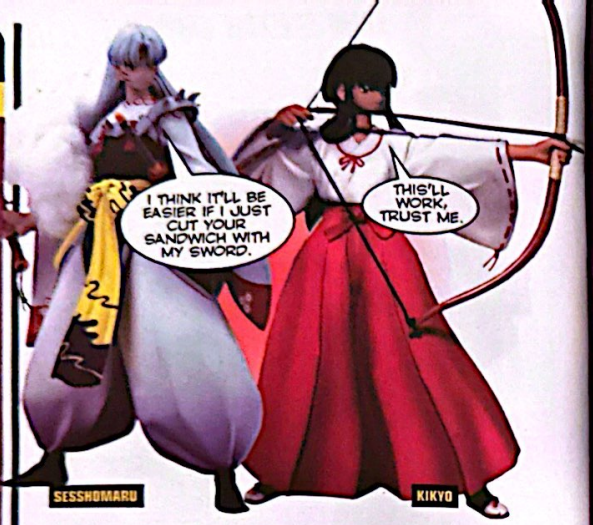
YOUR CD PLAYER DEMANDS SOUNDTRACKS

FLCL OST 2: KING OF PIRATES *FLCL* rocked all the way to the top of fandom charts when audiences first watched the insane show with an undeniably cool soundtrack full of amazing guitar riffs and rock-style jams. This second volume includes more tracks from J-rock fan-favorites The Pillows, and also "drama" tracks—that is, dialogue from the Japanese voice actors themselves, in character! Geneon Anime Music

LOVE NINA: NINADA GIRLS SONG COLLECTION You know them as the residents of the Minato Inn, but did you know that they're pop singers, too? Check out the girls' crooning skills in this compilation of original songs as they head out of the series and into the studios. Geneon Anime Music

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION: DAY OF SECOND IMPACT OST Released in Japan as a special album to commemorate the series' date of apocalypse, this CD is much like a "Best Of" Album, featuring many popular recurring theme songs from composer Shiro Sagisu (*His and Her Circumstances*)! Geneon Anime Music

R.O.D. THE TV OST Featuring a cool, jazzy opening theme and a soundtrack inspired by the original *Read or Die* original soundtrack, this new album won't disappoint fans of the OVA or newcomers to the series. Geneon Anime Music ■ Miguel A.E. Esquivel



THE FINAL SWORD

Now Kagome and Inuyasha have someone to fight! Series 2 of the *Inuyasha* toy line is here, featuring Sesshomaru with his Toukijin and Tenseiga swords, and Kikyo with her bow and arrow. Each figure goes for $11.99, features multiple points of articulation and is evil. Evil! www.toynami.com

GIFT WITH THE PROGRAM

As if .hack// isn't already the gift that keeps on giving, they've already "upgraded" the CCG! The .hack//ENEMY TCG gift set feature stylized cartoon versions of the popular characters, six new alternate image cards and booster packs, certificates of authenticity all in a limited deck box for $19.95. www.decipher.com

MICHELLE, MA BELLE

If this cool 7-inch statue of *R.O.D. the TV*'s Michelle, the eldest of the three Paper Sister Detectives, was made out of paper, she could use it bring down some bad guys. Instead, it just looks really, really good. Set her on the paper trail—or your desk—for only $24.99. www.yamato-toysusa.com

GO FIGURE

Who needs trading card games, when you can go 3-D? Incorporating *shogi* chess strategies and anime-inspired collectible miniatures, *Navia Dratp* game uses a flip-dial system for virtually limitless possibilities. Boosters are $8.99, but the $29.99 starter set includes eight figures, currency, character cards and a game mat! ww.naviadratp.com

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THANKS, JAPAN!

COOL AND CRAZY SWAG FROM OVERSEAS!

FANTASY COME TRUE HOT PICK

Everybody loves Final Fantasy, so this Trading Arts figure collection is like gold—expensive and nearly impossible to find. The figures include fan-favorites from the last four games, including Cloud, Sephiroth, Lulu, Rinoa, Vivi and Yuna, but beware—since they're blind-packaged, you may end up with the pewter variants.

CLOUD

ICE PICK-ACHU

Proving that you can put Pokémon even on imaginary products, the hand-powered slushie-making Pikachu is a wonder. Fill him with ice, salt, cold water and then a bit o' beverage, shake vigorously, and the instructions say you'll have a tasty treat. *The instructions lie.*

PIKACHU

ULTRA HARD

Have you played Jenga, that game where you try to take out blocks out of a tower without it toppling? Ultraman has given it a twisted twist—can you knock out sections of this poo-like adversary using Ultraman's head on a stick without knocking him down? The answer is no!

ULTRAMAN JENGA

ZING BLADE

Roronoa Zoro is one lean, mean, sword-fightin' machine, and now he's been shrunk to a more convenient size. Available alongside fellow *One Piece* cast members Nami and Monkey D. Luffy, these ridiculously well-sculpted 12-inch vinyl statues are *One Piece* perfection.

ZORO

MONEY TALKS

When Osamu Tezuka created Astro Boy way back, he posited Astro would be created in Takadanobaba, a sub-section of Tokyo. To celebrate the boy robot's 2004 "birth," Takadanobaba issued its own money, right with Astro on every bill!

ASTRO BOY BUCKS

Andrez Bergen & Zac Bertschy

SMELLS LIKE FIGHTING SPIRITS

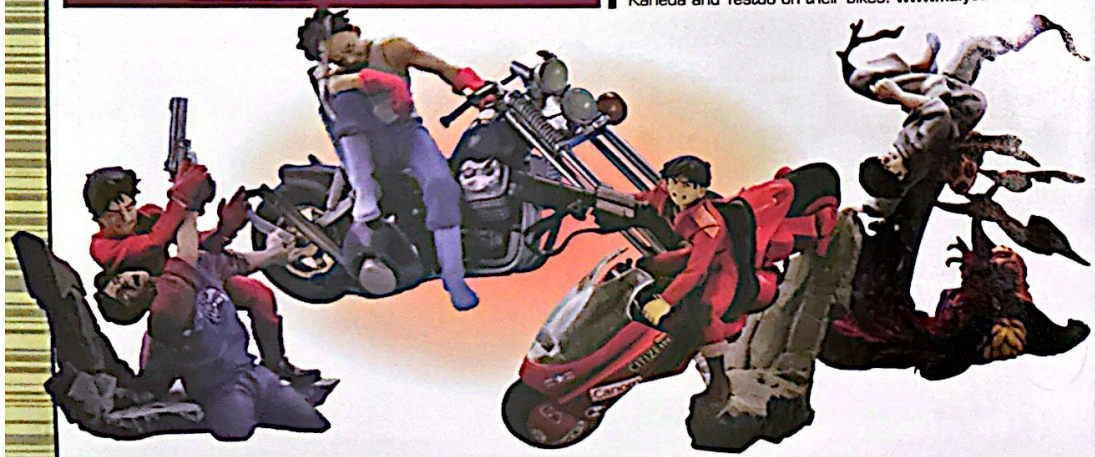
Every 500 years, the Shaman Fight occurs, where mediums the world over use spirits in battle! Determine who'll become the next fabled *Shaman King* with these Shaman King action figures for only $8.50 each. Collect Yoh and his friends, and each of their Shaman tokens! www.mattel.com

PYRAMID SCHEME

An ancient evil has awoken in Egypt, and it's looking for Yami Yugi, the incarnation of the pharaoh that defeated it millennia ago! Now you can battle against Anubis with even more abilities and monsters in the new *Yu-Gi-Oh!* Movie Exclusive booster packs, for only $4.99, and keep him from destroying Yugi and the entire world. www.upperdeck.com

BLAME KANEDA

Now larger and more detailed, the fully painted PVC *Akira* Capsule Toy Series Three figures come in opaque capsules, so they're as much a mystery to us as the movie's end! Each figure costs only $2.99, including Kei, Tetsuo, Takashi, Yamagata and Kaneda and Testuo on their bikes. www.kaiyodo.com



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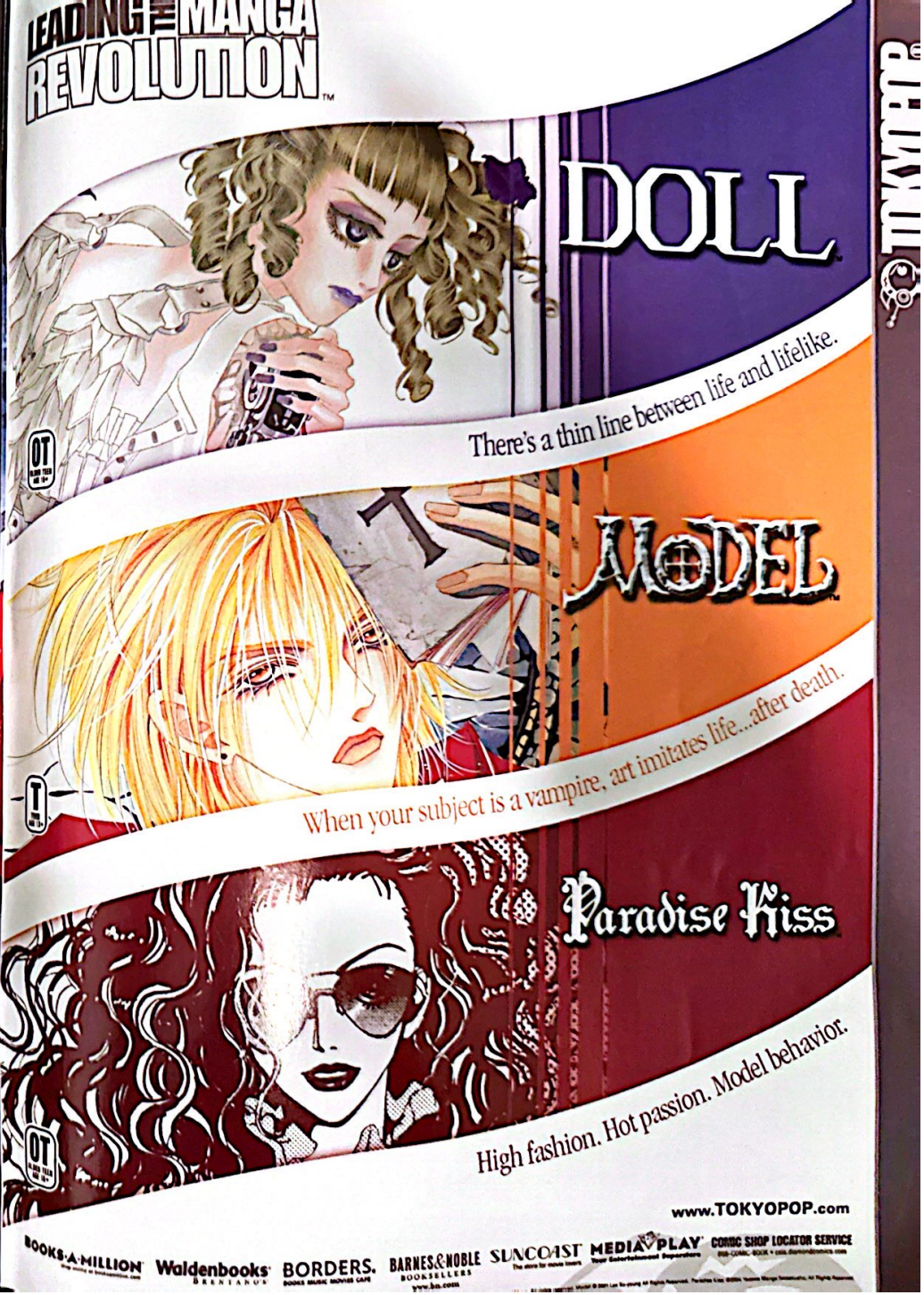
PARTING SHOT

Ah, fame. They say even the best actors must suffer through the tediousness of makeup and costume prepping, a saying that holds true for these elite theater monkeys in Nikko, Japan. This troupe of 30-some Macaques (all of whom are named after famous samurai by their trainer) perform in half-hour shows, doing everything from sit-ups to skits to...well, dressing like rabbits in the prestigious Nikko Monkey Theater.

Famous for its overly friendly monkeys (travelers have been known to be mugged), the Nikko area has hosted monkey shows for over a century. Only the best of the best make it to the Monkey Theater, though, which itself has inspired two TV series. Just goes to show you that these guys are part of a serious monkey business. ■ **Robert Bricken**

LEADING THE MANGA REVOLUTION™



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